This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

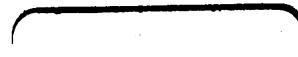
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3433 07575352 9



NCW

Stretton

V.3
IVCU
Strett

THE

VALLEY OF A HUNDRED FIRES.

J. C. Stretton

BY

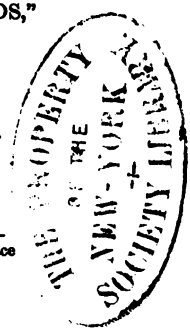
THE AUTHOR OF

"MARGARET AND HER BRIDESMAIDS,"

"MR. AND MRS. ASHETON,"

&c., &c.

[Mrs. Marsh]



"Who are the Blest?
They who have kept their sympathies awake,
And scattered joy for more than custom's sake—
Steadfast and tender in the hour of need;
Gentle in thought, benevolent in deed;
Whose looks have power to make dissensions cease—
Whose smiles are pleasant, and whose words are peace
They who have lived as harmless as the dove,
Teachers of Truth, and Ministers of Love:
Love for all moral power—all mental grace—
Love for the humblest of the human race—
Love for that tranquil joy that virtue brings—
Love for the Giver of all goodly things;
True followers of that soul-exalting plan
Which Christ laid down to bless and govern man:
They who can calmly linger at the last,
Survey the future, and recall the past;
And with that hope which triumphs over pain,
Feel well assured they have not lived in vain;
Then wait in peace their hour of final rest:—
They are the only Blest."

T. C. PRINCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

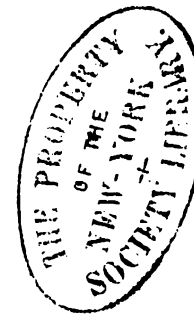
VOL. III.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1860.

The right of Translation is reserved.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
146222B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
B 1941 L

LONDON:
PRINTED BY R. BORN, GLOUCESTER STREET,
REGENT'S PARK.



THE

VALLEY OF A HUNDRED FIRES.

CHAPTER I.

"Not by appointment do we meet Delight
And Joy—they need not our expectancy;
But round some corner in the streets of life
They on a sudden clasp us with a smile."

GERALD MASSY.

ERE the ink was dry that wrote the words in Mr. Leslie's journal, there was a shout, a noise, a sudden commotion! He ran out—as he arrived at the front door the carriage drove up.

In one moment the prettiest Pearl that ever was seen (he could not mistake her) sprung out of the carriage and was in his arms—Adeline followed—then Sir Edward and Lady Armitage. The greeting between them all, mamma and the little girls crowding round and jostling papa out of his first favourable position, was prodigious. "My darlings, my loves, welcome, welcome!—we are so glad to see you—we are so happy, so delighted!" The Babel of exclamations passed all belief.

But Nessie—where can she be?—there were but four inside the coach, and they are now all out it.

"Where is Nest?" said papa.

"Here, papa!" said a voice close to him, and coming from some one who had just alighted from the seat behind the carriage.

"Here!" echoed papa, surveying a tall and womanly girl, who half shyly, half blushingly, and certainly with some tears in her eyes,

stood before him. "This Nessie!—impossible!"

"Im-possible!" echoed all the little sisters.

"Impossible!" exclaimed mamma, more strongly than any.

Lady Armitage was delighted.

If this was Nest, she is taller than Adeline, taller than mamma, nay, taller than papa himself.

And it must be her. There is something unmistakable in the eyes and mouth, something irresistibly reminding them of the turbulent Nest—woman grown as she is. The astonishment waxes louder and louder.

"I would not tell you, my dear sister. I wished you to be surprised. I considered that if she astonished us every day by her growth and improvement, what would you all say? I am amply repaid for my forbearance. Is not this delightful, Edward?"

They were now all in the drawing-room,

again kissing, embracing, and congratulating each other. And astonishment giving place to pleasure, they had time to look at each other. Gwenny need not have been dissatisfied with her three grand elder sisters' decision regarding them. They each wondered at the change in the others. When health, exercise, and happiness are permitted to develop the frame we receive from our Maker, how beautiful is youth just changing from childhood into girlhood. The bloom so fresh, the eyes so bright, the expression so good and ingenuous, and over all such buoyant happiness. No wonder Mr. and Mrs. Leslie, and all the little Leslies, gazed at the three elder daughters of the house with unmistakable admiration.

"My dear sister, how are we ever to thank you sufficiently for such very great pleasure—such a delightful surprise!"

"I am amply repaid. In general 'anti-

cipation' is a defaulter, but this time it has more than answered my fondest hopes. Go, children, and take off your bonnets and shawls, I will send for you when you are wanted — that is, with your permission, sister."

Mrs. Leslie agreeing, she watched in the highest delight their all congregating together in a loving cluster, as, highly charmed, they hastened to take advantage of their aunt's permission.

"It appears to me," said Mr. Leslie, as they departed, "that we are very much beholden to you, my dear brother and sister. You took from us two little sad and stricken children, and you return us three blooming maidens, of whom any parents may be proud. I thank you."

And he arose, after his grave fashion, and shook hands with each.

"Pearl always promised to be pretty," remarked her mother, half-blushing at thus

praising her own daughter; "but Nest astonishes me."

"True," said her husband, "she seems not only healthy and strong, but to have grown rather a handsome girl."

"Perhaps a little too tall," interrupted Emily.

"Not at all," exclaimed both Sir Edward and Lady Armitage; "and let me add," continued he, "that she is a very excellent, docile child—we have had no fault to find with her."

As the elders thus discoursed, overflowing with their tide of family affairs, the young ones were not a whit behindhand.

"Nessie, if you are Nessie," said Gwladys and Gwenny, "don't take off your bonnet" (they were all running up to see the darling Joan, and the new baby), "but let us surprise Wilsy."

This was considered a felicitous idea. Adeline and Pearl disrobed, Nest remained

bonneted and cloaked, looking a greater woman than ever.

Wilsy was in a state of the highest expectation, her Roman nose drawn into an acute angle by the breadth of her smiles. Little Joan so beautifully dressed, and taking the hearts of all three sisters by an instantaneous gush of feeling that brought tears into all their eyes—and they paid no heed to the new baby sister until they had kissed those lovely, loving eyes.

But as for Wilsy—that renowned nursery commandant, that merciless lover of soap and brushing, that arbitrary inflicter of condign punishment—Wilsy, whom they always feared, obeyed, and succumbed to, more than papa and mamma, Wilsy sat down in amazement, to think that such beautiful young ladies should have been her nurslings.

"Oh! Miss Leslie—but my word, ye must forgive me, I am always used to the kiss—"

but I never thought to see you growed into a young lady, and so I tuk it, and I ought to have given you my curtsey, and Miss Pearl—indeed, Miss Pearl, you are quite the little lady, and have your fine colour still; but who wad have thought that furrin parts was so wonderful. You are a real beauty, Miss Pearl, and so it's no use any denying of it. And me so afraid as school might spoil you. Yer just pictures both on you——."

Wilsy's admiration was mounting up higher and higher, as did the blushes on the two girls' faces; but there was a stir of impatience among the young ones. Wilsy was a long time noticing the stranger, who still kissed Joan with such fond affection.

"But here's another young lady," began Gwenny—"she has come to see Joan."

Wilsy turned reluctantly from the pleasant sight of Adeline and Pearl, and politely curtseyed, saying:—

"I am very proud to show her, ma'am; and for all she is so small, she's as healthy as healthy can be. And so knowledgeable —she's joost wisdom's self, and the sweetest tempered of all my nurslings, except, perhaps, Miss Lily."

Wilsy stopped, astonished at the tittering delight of her young flock, and a little bewildered by the tender air with which the stranger regarded Joan, kissing her soft cheek, upon which a sudden tear fell.

"But, my word," said she quickly, "where's Miss Nest? I should have guessed she would have been the first up to see Miss Joan. Mappen she wants carrying up. Take the baby, Miss Gwladys, while I run and see."

"No, she does not, she does not," they all cried; "she can walk very well herself."

"And never got up yet to see Miss Joan!—I should ha' thought she wad have been the very first."

"And so she is, Wilsy," said Nest; "only you will not notice or speak to her."

"I have not seen her yet, ma'am," answered Wilsy, bridling, and disposed to be rather put out by the shouts of laughter.

"What must I do, Wilsy, to make you know me?"

"Not possible!" returned Wilsy, looking at her; "Miss Leslie, Miss Pearl, it's not possible!"

"See, don't you think I am Nest now?" and, throwing her arms round Wilsy, she gave her a truly Nest kiss.

"My word, but I am dazed! If you are Miss Nest, you should thank the Lord, my dear—for indeed He has been very merciful to you. Such a weed as you was!—'deed, I see you're Miss Nest, by them teeth; but I would not have known you. Such a fine young girl—she's the tallest of all, and stoutest. And a colour—I beg your pardon, my dear, but you are to the full as handsome as the others."

"Oh! don't beg my pardon for that, Wilsy, I like it better than what you used to say to Pearl and me. 'Ill weeds grow apace' to me, and 'Good stuff is wrapped up in little bundles' to Pearl."

"Never fash to remember what slips out in a flurry, my dear. It's past everything——" and Wilsy took a deliberate walk all round Nest, to make a thorough investigation.

The most amusing comedy in the world could not have afforded more delight than this scene to the little Leslies. But Nest, not accustomed to admiration, began to grow uncomfortable.

"I am not so 'mischeevous' as I was, Wilsy," she began.

"Now, be done, Miss Nest, and don't remember you of bygones. And why wasn't we prepared, young ladies?"

"Because I grew so fast, there was not time to prepare you," answered Nest, laugh-

ing; "but come, let me see if Joan will come to her Nessie. Darling little thing, she will!"

It is needless to say that the little Leslies enacted this *petite* comedy with every new visitor, and enjoyed it all the more from repetition.

Gwenny's little private ambition of excelling her foreign sisters experienced a shock at first. But with the dauntless spirit of her grandmother rising strong within her, she derived consolation from the fact that she and Gwladys knew a number of things her sisters did not. Such as in all kinds of needle-work (which in truth was an art not patronized by Lady Armitage) they were decidedly superior. In the common exercise of good round text handwriting, Nest and Pearl were far behind; while at various games, "Tip-tap-toe"—French and English—the golden goose, they were profoundly ignorant.

So an agreement was made for an interchange of accomplishments.

Notwithstanding their age, their dignified appearance, with frocks as long as Adeline's, below their ankles, Nest and Pearl ran up and down the Cinder Tip with as much spirit as heretofore, and enacted plays in the coach-house, excelling past days in the most charming manner.

But they had not been a week united once more before the quick mother eyes of Mrs. Leslie detected a change in Adeline.

Even more gentle and submissive to her aunt than before, untiring in her endeavours to fulfil all her wishes, she appeared to fail in pleasing her in any one point.

Exacting and severe with Adeline — Nest and Pearl did everything that was right in her eyes. At first, Mrs. Leslie feared that the younger sisters, especially Nest, had supplanted the elder one in the affections

of her sister. But they appeared unconscious of any such injustice to Adeline, and kept in the background, their usual habit. While Adeline, with a beautiful unselfishness, always screened her sisters when they committed any act likely to call forth their aunt's displeasure. And there was nothing but the most perfect love and good feeling between them.

It was with motherly commands and entreaties that Mrs. Leslie extracted from Adeline the real cause of this untoward state of things. It was love. For some moments our Emily was unable to think of any other thing, so astonished was she to discover she had a daughter old enough not only to be loved, but to love. And yet Adeline was now the same age of Emily herself when she fell in love with and married John.

During their sojourn abroad they had seen a great deal of a Mr. Badinell, the

son of the Bishop of ——, a young clergyman. As Adeline discoursed of his manners, appearance, and amiability, Emily felt herself eighteen once more. She was in love with the very description of so charming a young man, and in the enthusiasm of her nature longed to call him a son-in-law at once.

"I suppose he is very poor," murmured she, sadly.

"I think not, mamma, he has a very good living, and his father gives him 300*l.* a-year besides."

"Three hundred a-year, my dear child—that is quite sufficient to marry upon, without the living."

"Dear mother, my aunt does not think so."

"He has not made himself agreeable, or pleasant to her."

"On the contrary, she likes him so much, that she loved him almost as a son, until, until——."

"I understand, love," interrupted her mother, rescuing Adeline from her blushing hesitation; "and, of course, your uncle has a very good opinion of him also."

"Very, very much so. He thinks that he will one day become what he calls 'a pillar of the Church.' Or, in other words, dear mamma, he has said, he both respects and admires his character."

"Young, good-looking, rich, and so amiable, what possible reason has my dear sister to reject so excellent a young man?"

"Because, because, mother — you must pardon me if I appear vain."

"Vain, my darling—most excellent child —I am vain, if you wish — vain of the dearest daughter!"

Here they kissed each other fondly, a way Emily had, when the English language failed her, in its paucity of powers of expression — though every one does not consider that its greatest want.

"There is another," faltered and blushed Adeline, "one whom she wishes me to marry. But, mamma, as long as I felt a preference for Mr. Badinell in my heart, I thought it not right to suffer the other to —to——."

"Hope, dearest—quite right. In everything you have acted admirably, and now you must suffer me to tell your father. It is our duty, our first and happiest duty, to consider our children's wishes. Such good, dear children as you all are! Your uncle will doubtless assist us, and I have no doubt we shall soon persuade your dear aunt. I feel confident everything will give way to secure your happiness."

CHAPTER II.

"There will come
Alike the day of trial unto all,
And the rude world will buffet us alike.
Temptation hath a music for all ears,
And mad ambition trumpeteth to all;
And the ungovernable thought within
Will be in every bosom eloquent."

N. P. Willis.

But Emily's confidence was crushed into an atrophy, and nearly annihilated for ever.

Lady Armitage, to use the mildest simile, burst out like a pent-up thunder storm.

"She had nothing to say against the young man—nothing. He was handsome,

most agreeable, with the finest teeth she ever saw. Indeed, she liked him so much that perhaps she had been to blame in asking him so often to the house. But that he should take advantage of her kindness, and fall in love with Adeline —and that Adeline should have regarded him in any other light than just an agreeable acquaintance, was a want of principle on both their parts she never could forgive. Had she taken such pains with Adeline—made her one of the most accomplished girls in the world, besides one of the best—"

"That God and her mother made her," interrupted Mr. Leslie.

"Besides one of the best," reiterated Lady Armitage, in high scorn at this interruption, "only to grace a parsonage—to be an awarder of prizes at charity schools—a collector of soup tickets at Christmas—a judge of flannel—a knitter of comforters?—never!

To be sure, Mr. Badinell bid fair to rise in his profession; she had no doubt he would—in fact, she hoped sincerely that she might live to see him a bishop; but what good would that be to Adeline? He would not be a bishop until they were both old—and then she would have no rank of any kind. And a peeress she had always designed Adeline to be; and she should never have her consent to marry, without. She had told Mr. Badinell to wait for Nest. Nest would do very well for him. She would be delighted to have him for a nephew in that way; she really was extremely fond of him. And considering that no one could be in the house, and see much of Adeline, without falling in love with her, she would excuse that; but she never would forgive his persisting in loving her, when she had forbidden him to do so."

Against such arguments there really

was no arguing; and agreeing between themselves that some deference must be paid to her wishes, the father and mother proceeded to discover if Adeline was equally unpersuadable. But they were again stranded in their hopes. She was a girl of firm and strong mind, with very high principles. Once certain in her opinion, there was no likelihood of change. But added to these, she had a hopeful, most cheerful heart.

"Do not fear for me, my dear father and mother," said she, smiling and weeping at the same time. "I cannot control my affections, now they are given —and to one so worthy; but I shall not repine. I was a little deceived by my aunt's liking for him herself, which was so great, I let mine go, trusting all would be right. I say thus much, dear mamma, in a sort of vindication of myself. I would not have

you think I gave away my heart from the first in wilful opposition to my dearest aunt.

"We are sure of that, my love."

"In time, I hope, to please my aunt in other ways. I shall the more try to do so, because I have so unwittingly disappointed her in this. I feel that I am not likely to change at present; but if I should do so, I will not vex her one moment longer than I can avoid."

"I know not whether I love or admire you most, my dear good girl," said her father. "Much consideration is due to your aunt from us all—but when your mother and I see your happiness likely to be sacrificed, we will then step forward. It is our duty, and will be our pleasure."

"Thank you, dear papa. I am very young yet, and indeed I should scarcely like to leave my aunt so soon—not until I have repaid her, by all the love and

duty in my power, for her constant care of me. If Mr. Badinell really loves me, he will not think much of the delay of two or three years. I could know little happiness if I commenced a new life, and entered into such an important engagement, without my second mother's blessing."

"God bless you, dearest child," said both her parents; "and he will do so, for you deserve it."

Adeline received their kisses and blessing with tearful pleasure, and then returned to practise a new song with which to surprise her aunt.

"Now, is not this very tiresome?" began Emily to John, when they were alone. So far from feeling gratified that her daughter was thus admired and sought after, she was for once in her life extremely cross.

"I presume, my dear," answered John, quietly, "we must be about expecting such things."

"Not at all, very far from it, I should say. I suppose this other person has a title, or expects one," remarked Emily, just by way of nothing.

"I suppose so," answered her husband; "but, of course, Adeline is perfectly right to withhold his name."

"Exactly so—just like her, dear, good girl—everything she does is just what she ought to do. But I cannot wonder at my sister's disappointment, if he was an Earl's son, and that Adeline might one day become a Countess?"

"And I cannot but wonder that Adeline's mother should show she is a little disappointed, too."

"My dear John ——"

"My dear would-be mother-in-law to an Earl! Ah! Emily, Emily, to think of your becoming an old woman full of vanities!"

"Now, John—but at least allow Adeline is quite fitted for a coronet."

"She is fitted for a crown, which I hope she will one day wear. But, Emily, I shall consult our brother, and abide by his advice. He loves our girl as if she was his own, and I think would not willingly see her suffer. I think myself she has judged wisely, in wishing to wait a few years. Though I called you an old woman just now, you are still as handsome as either of your girls; and I am taken by surprise when I look at you, and remember that you have a marriageable daughter."

"There is one thing I shall certainly do," said Emily, totally ignoring this handsome compliment of John's. "The other girls shall all marry the first person that asks them—I will not have them teased."

"Excuse me," answered John; "the first person that asks them, whether they like them or not?"

"No, no, the first person they like."

"But we cannot hope they will all be as sensible as Adeline."

"True—well, then, I hope they will not marry at all; fortunately they are still very young, and Nest I do not think is ever likely to do so."

"Why not? For the last week I have gazed and gazed into my daughter Nest's face, until I have almost persuaded myself she is a handsome girl."

"Oh! she is that indeed; in fact, Mr. Sabine, and the doctor, and Mrs. Dawson think she will be the best looking of the three—but then she is so very tall. I fear she may be masculine."

"She has a pretty, blushing girl's face. I am not sure that I don't agree with Mr. Sabine, and——"

"Oh no, you don't, John, really; only as we never expected her to be so nice-looking, we are surprised and pleased—that's all."

"Certainly, that may be all; but now I must leave you for the present. I have business at the school. And, Emily, just a word—don't side too much with your sister. I fear the prospect of that coronet will make poor Adeline's wishes kick the beam when you two get together."

Emily was not to be snubbed thus by John. She had her womanly and motherly feelings; if she had never been vain personally, she appeared likely to have a double dose of that failing in regard to her children.

Tiresome as it was to have Adeline made unhappy, she began to visit the sin of it on Mr. Badinell rather than her sister. Anon, when she thought of all Adeline had said of him, and remembered her sweet, blushing face as she talked of him, she felt quite low at being so unjust. In this perplexing mental state, she had no other resource left than to agree with her sister

in all she said and did, with most praiseworthy assiduity — while she petted, and praised, and exalted Adeline up to the topmost pinnacle of maternal infatuation.

Meantime, John went about his parish business; and while employed thereon he received so many compliments, in respect of his daughters, that he became almost as full of vanity as his wife.

"My dear Emily," said he, on his return, "are you prepared to receive a proposal of marriage for your daughter Nest."

"John!"

"Mr. Hugh John Sabine, my dear, trusts that Regina will grow up the precise counterpart of our second daughter. I have observed that little men always admire tall women."

Now, when a joke was simple and plain, Emily understood it and enjoyed it vastly.

"My dear great Nessie!" answered she,

smiling; "I think with you, John, it is so. Mr. Sabine is always hoping Regina will be very tall, and I have a great idea that she will. She is taller now than Joan. Mr. Hugh John—well, at all events, Nessie will be able to say she had one admirer."

"Pray, remember there are two of us: I admire my daughter Nest very much, also."

CHAPTER III.

"And must we part?—then fare thee well!
But he that wails it—he can tell
How dear thou wert, how dear thou art,
And ever must be to this heart;
But now 'tis vain—it cannot be.
Farewell, and think no more of me."

J. J. CALLANAN.

MRS. LESLIE appeared entirely to have forgotten the faithful Jeffreys, who, at the very moment she spoke last, was now arriving at his father's door. We hope the reader has not, for he is just returning from his long walk through hospitals and fever wards, with the intention of becoming his father's assistant.

There he is, seated in the highest delight by the parlour-fire, some hot negus by his side—his father's warmest slippers on his feet, and his mother opposite to him glowing with joy. There had been a sharp May-frost during his journey, chilling him through, so that until he experienced a glow he was unable to do more than answer his mother's anxious questions. But his fingers and faculties alike recovering their numbness, he burst forth at last with startling energy.

"And now, mother, how is my darling Nest?"

"A greater darling than ever—oh! my dear Jeffreys, so wonderfully grown and improved——"

"Does she wear my pin?"

"That she does;" and with great justice Mrs. Dawson might have added, "and so do all the family."

The first independent purchase the en-

amoured Jeffreys had ever made was in the procuring of two pins exactly alike. They were rather large in dimensions, and composed of a series of stones—the first letter of each of their names spelling the word "Regard;" and they were arranged so as to fulfil that intention, without studying effect. He would like to have had one expressive of a warmer attachment; but the world was unhappily deficient in the necessary stones. One pin was for himself, and in carrying out his sentimental intention of wearing the same thing as his lady-love, Jeffreys considered not of what use a pin could be to a young lady, who had no elaborate neck-ties to fasten. Nevertheless, as the only piece of jewellery that had ever found its way into the Lesliean nursery (for the children there were not in the habit of demanding the use of their mother's trinkets), it was long regarded with high respect, and was used whenever an

occasion presented itself, indiscriminately. Little Joan had been most favoured by its adornment, for it was a capital pin to fasten the shawl in which she was so constantly wrapped. At the present moment—namely, just as Jeffreys asked his last question of his mother—the pin was doing duty for the baby, festooning the curtains of her cradle in a graceful knot, which it fastened tight, against the encroachments of her innocent fingers.

"Mother, I must go and see her the first thing in the morning."

"So you shall, my dear. It is very right that you go as soon as possible to pay your respects to Mr. and Mrs. Leslie."

"Pooh, nonsense! I go to pay my *devoirs* to the lady of my love."

Even Mrs. Dawson could judge this grand sentiment and the general appearance of her beloved son were not in accordance. At no time handsome, Jeffreys,

chilled in some parts of his frame, was now suffering from an overflow of aninus at the extremities, that inflamed his nose, and eyes, and ears, most unbecomingly. So she hurried him off to bed, and tucked him up warm and comfortably—trusting to such genial care for the restoration of his complexion the next morning.

And in her eyes he looked very well indeed—arrayed in a blue coat, with handsome brass buttons, a white waistcoat, a blue tie, on which reposed the twin pin, and light kerseymere continuations, with patent boots—just become a boon granted to the fashionable world. No one was in the room but Adeline when he arrived at the parsonage. Her sweet, cordial manner went straight to his heart, and smote him with an inward pang, as he remembered his apostasy from her charms. Nevertheless, there was something

so refined, so at ease about Adeline, he comforted himself by thinking he must have adored at a distance—she was above him, as much as the mountains rose above the river.

But suddenly there sprang into the room a vision of loveliness. The moment she saw him she drew up her little figure with such dignity; and then, when she knew who he was, came forward with so pretty a grace, holding out such a dear little white hand. And then her nose—Jeffreys, like many people, had his one weakness, a passion for noses, thin, delicate, straight—in short, the exact reverse of his own. Pearl's nose was perfection. What thoughts ran riot in his brain—what remembrances of untidy Nests, so unlike the little Pearl of beauty now before him! He was fast verging into a state of entire faithlessness to Nest, when that amiable young lady entered the room.

Though she was grown into such a fine womanly creature, her manner was just the same—there was no mistaking her. She greeted him after her usual "rumbustical" fashion, as Wilsy called it, ending her welcome by the sudden exclamation:—

"Why! he has got my pin!"

He succumbed at once. The voice, the way, the imperious air, enthralled him in more strong allegiance than ever. Adeline's grace and Pearl's beauty faded before such magnificent charms, such haughty sauciness of manner, that bewitched him, and made a fool of him. To be reduced to such a situation was delightful agony to him. Nest had the power to charm and torture him at one and the same moment, with equal intensity. And in this (to sensible people) most painful state of existence he revelled.

The natural consequence of this state

of things was that he was of very little use to his father.

"Dolly, I can't trust him to weigh out an ounce of salts, the simplest medical remedy known. So far from being of use to me, I am afraid to let him into the surgery at all."

"Well, well, let him have a little holiday for once; he is our only one, and I have often heard you say you can leave him independent."

"Now, Dolly, if you let out that secret to him you may as well go buy the rope to hang him with. He must work; every man came into the world to work—'tis his duty. And let me tell you, his profession is a grand one; the power it gives——"

"To be sure, certainly," answered his spouse, who had often heard the doctor's homily on the beauties of his profession, and so might be pardoned if she sometimes en-

deavoured to escape it. "But let him have a holiday for the next fortnight. I understand Sir Edward and Lady Armitage leave then; and they take Nest back with them, as a companion to Adeline."

"But I do not see what good that will be. He will certainly fall in love with Pearl."

"Pearl is going too, back to school with Gwenny; and really of Gwladys you need not be afraid—she is quite a child."

"I am not so sure of that. Dress the tongs up in petticoats, and he will fall in love with them. So unlike me. I never looked into any woman's face, unprofessionally, but one, and that was yours, Dolly."

"He, it appears, has your share as well as his own. Now, bear with him a little, doctor, just come home as he is."

Mrs. Dawson found her husband much more reasonable than her son. His state was fast verging on the despairing sort;

and when he discovered that Nest was going away for another whole year, his sufferings became too acute for further endurance.

"Mother;" exclaimed he, attempting to tear his hair, and grinding his teeth as if he were a near relation of Grumbo the giant, "I must speak to her father and mother. I am nearly twenty-five, and it's time I was settled."

"My dear, my dear!" expostulated his mother, "she is so young—quite a child."

"But, mother, mother, she is going away for a whole year; some one may snatch her from me. Who can see her without adoring her?"

"Every one is not of your mind, Jeffreys; you must be reasonable, son."

Mrs. Dawson tried to be severe.

"But why should I not speak to her father and mother? If she left home partially engaged to me, that would ease my agonies."

"I certainly see no harm in that. When your father awakes, we will ask his consent."

"I consent at once," remarked the doctor from out of his comfortable snoozing chair. "Only let it be done as soon as possible. I am very much in love with Nest—myself," and the doctor was asleep in a moment, and ended the last word in a sound somewhat resembling a snore.

"There, there, mother—I told you so—every one will be falling in love with her."

"My dear, don't be jealous of your father. He only loves her as a daughter."

"Just so—no more," came from the chair—not spoken, but hummed out as in a dream.

Imagine the dismay of Emily when, called into his sanctum by Mr. Leslie, Mr. Jeffreys propounded his hopes and wishes.

"Is he talking of Nest?" said she—"our child?"

"It appears so," answered her husband, calmly. "I think I understood you so, young man."

"Yes, yes; of that adorable creature," exclaimed Jeffreys, out of all patience at this provoking composure.

"My daughter Nest is still a child; for her sake I am not disposed to listen to any matrimonial overtures concerning her—as yet—"

"But, sir—dear Mr. Leslie, I wish for no engagement, no particular promise, but merely to enrol myself as her first and most devoted admirer."

"Stay, stay, young man, I must have some conversation with your father."

"And here that father is!" cried the doctor, suddenly appearing. "I have no great faith in Mr. Jeffreys' common sense at present, so I came to supply that commodity. I love your daughter Nest as if she was my own child. Indeed, I consider any man

fortunate who can obtain a wife from out of your nursery. If you will promise her to my son, and give her to him at a fitting age, I will settle all I have in the world on both, with double the income at present that I and my wife began life with—and I require nothing with her, in return, but the nature she got from her father and mother."

"Sir, you are very liberal, and do us honour," answered Mr. Leslie.

"She is much too young," murmured Mrs. Leslie.

"I will wait—oh! I will wait years!" exclaimed the enamoured youth. "Hold out to me the smallest hope of such ineffable happiness, and Jacob himself could not be more patient."

"Oh! if you will wait, my dear Jeffreys," said Mrs. Leslie, her tender heart quite touched with his state, "that will be a very different thing—we can have no objection."

"No," continued her husband, "on the contrary, as I can never look very high for my daughters, having so many of them, and so little to give them, the affection of the son of so worthy and true an old friend as yourself, doctor, will be very pleasing."

Whereupon everybody seemed gratified, and they shook hands with each other, as if each had done the other some very great honour.

"But I must insist upon the matter being kept from Nest herself," said Mr. Leslie.

Jeffreys looked extremely rueful at this.

"If she does not know I love her, how can I be sure she may not have offers from others while she is absent, and accept one?"

"I do not think it at all likely."

"But allow me to show my devotion. I will not offer to her, but I merely wish

her to know before she leaves that no one can, or ever will, love her as I do."

"Pardon me, I cannot suffer her mind to be distracted from her studies. My daughters are good and obedient girls, but it does not follow that I am to overtax those qualities. For they are probably not a bit more sensible than other girls, and are capable of having their heads turned quite as soon. It is not fair, sir—allow her perfect freedom in idea, as well as reality, until she really is fit to judge for herself."

"Spoken like a book," exclaimed the doctor. "Now, son, do you hear? Make Mr. Leslie a promise that you will not seek to draw Nest into any entanglement, and then we will go, thanking them heartily for the kind and handsome manner in which they have received our proposal."

Jeffreys made a species of promise; but

hard-hearted parents and unkind friends being necessary concomitants to a true love-fit, he consoled himself with the chivalrous idea that fathers and mothers, with every other relation of any degree, ought to be sacrificed, if love so decreed.

Or, in other words, not being particularly sensible at any time, he was now reduced to a nondescript condition, rather bordering upon idiotcy. Fate thus wafted him about like the downy seeds of a thistle, and at last stranded him altogether. For, deriving a delightful anguish in regarding Nest as a joint-victim with himself to the cruel decree of calm, calculating, cold-hearted fathers and mothers, he could not resist the opportunity of assuring her that he was ready to sacrifice any one, or all of them conjointly together, for her sake; though how it was to be done, or in what manner or why, he left the fates to declare. All he wished for was an oppor-

tunity to assure her of this magnificent intention on his part, and receive some reward (he had not yet decided what this intense gratification was to be) in return.

In an unfortunate moment for Miss Nessie (or rather her father and mother, who trusted Jeffreys fully) she was seen flying over the Cinder Tip one day, her bonnet untied, her curls flying, evidently the bearer of some important message to the doctor. With beating heart Jeffreys heard her say, "I will stay in the garden while you write the answer, and peep into the strawberry-beds, to see if you are more fortunate than we are." The opportunity was irresistible. Cautiously stealing out, he softly approached.

"Nessie, dear."

"Out of school, sir—I shall tell your father."

"School! dearest, dearest Nest, how can you call the surgery a school? I am

studying my profession, and hope to rise in it, high as, nay higher than any other ever did—because—because I have such a motive."

"Yes, of course, it will please your mother."

"But not her only, Nest—dearest Nest, I love you."

"Of course you do—what have I done that you should not? Taste this strawberry —really they don't appear much smoked."

"Do you know that I love you? Do you feel it in your heart? Then I defy the world. The die is cast—I must speak! Nest, adored Nest, will you be mine? Nothing shall part us, if you but say the word. Two years is a lifetime to wait. We will not—we cannot; I promised your father and mother to say nothing until you were older; but now that I know you expect, you wish me to love you, I am at your feet—your slave!"

Nest had been listening to this rhapsody with a somewhat puzzled face, half amused, half scared. When he spoke of "two years, and her father and mother," the blood rushed to her face. Finally, when he sank on one knee, and tried to grasp her hand, with a cry of dismay she dashed it from her, turned, and fled. Over the hedge she flew like a bird, across the road, up the Cinder Tip, speeding along its pathway at racing pace, down the other side, across the lawn—dashing up the nursery stairs, she rushed into a small room, sacred to Adeline, and, locking fast the door, luckily fell straight into Adeline's arms.

"Nessie! what is the matter?"

"Hush, hush!" she whispered, in breathless spasms.

She had been hotly pursued the whole way, and was now fairly run to earth. He was rattling at the door, imploring admittance.

With distended eyes, Nest regarded the door as if it was made of pasteboard, and a fierce wild beast was on the other side. With her hand on Adeline's mouth she stood thus, until Wilsy's voice, rather elevated from part astonishment and part indignation, was heard parleying with the enemy. Anon Mr. Leslie's voice mingled with theirs, rather peremptory too. Finally, it appeared the enemy had been captured and borne away.

Then Nessie sunk into a chair, bursting into a flood of tears, and cried on with great heartiness, spite of all Adeline's questions and attempts at comfort. Then she was highly troubled too, and reduced to a most perplexed state of mind, but was shortly calmed by the arrival of Mrs. Leslie, at whose word Adeline unlocked and opened the door. Then Nessie stood up, and showed a face violently flushed and stained with

tears, both of which disfigurements increased as Mrs. Leslie said—

"My poor, dear little Nessie, do not cry, dear; he is a very stupid young man, very; and your papa is scolding him. We had desired him to say nothing to you, and he promised—and now he has broken his promise; but he is very unhappy, very unhappy indeed. And so, dear, you can just come down, and say you forgive him, and then—"

"No, no!" gasped out Nessie.

"He is very penitent. He has begged your father's pardon and mine; but he feels so miserable, he cannot go without yours."

Mrs. Leslie pleaded on in her most persuadable voice, but not any other answer could she get than that "No, no!" which from a girl usually so obedient as Nest could not be gainsayed. So Mrs. Leslie went downstairs again, much perplexed what to do—more especially as Jeffreys tore

his hair, rolled his eyes, and enacted other very violent deeds.

Mr. Leslie not being so tender-hearted as Emily, and really angry with the young man, sharply reproved him, and sent him away.

The next day the elder branches had a consultation; and as Mrs. Leslie was obliged to confess that her daughter Nest would neither see, nor speak to, nor venture into the society of the love-distracted youth, not apparently able even to pronounce his name, these were all considered symptoms of an unmistakable dislike. Consequently, it would be necessary to tear away this devoted attachment, which had reposed so long in the bosom of the faithful Jeffreys.

So it was decreed that Mrs. Dawson should take Jeffreys a little tour, to divert his mind. And as he had always a longing (for he was incapable of moderate likes or dislikes) to see Paris, there

should they go. And as Mrs. Dawson was so essentially English—she did not know a word of French—Bessie Trumps should be asked to go with her.

"By which means," said innocent Mrs. Leslie, "Bessie will improve herself in the French language."

"By which means," responded that cynical man, her husband, "Jeffreys will discover how superior Bessie Trumps is to Nest."

"Not at all, John, though I wish he may; but look in his face, and see how bitterly he is suffering."

"I see, my dear, that he is much plainer. I always considered him an ugly boy; but now—"

"He has been crying so much, though he is a very stupid man for acting as he did; 'tis all his own fault. I daresay if he had waited until Nessie was a little older, she would have had him."

"I doubt it, Emily—that is, if Nessie in-

herits any of her ideas from me. But now let us think no more on the matter. What with your eldest daughter not being allowed to marry the man she likes, and your second daughter refusing to marry the man you like, there appears a sad prospect before you of unceasing wear and tear of nerves, until your ten daughters are settled in life."

Emily tried to smile, then shook her head, evidently thinking John rather heartless.

Now, whether Nessie really disliked Jeffreys, or, scared by his being the first to awaken her from her innocent child-life, giving her a momentary glimpse of another that alarmed her by the contrast, is only known to Miss Nest herself. Whatever it might be, she lost for ever the chance of being Mrs. J. D. Mr. Leslie was right. He came from Paris engaged to Bessie Trumps, who caught his bruised and lace-

rated heart by her love and admiration of Nest, by her unwearied listening to his plaints. And before they either of them saw that wild, heartless Nest again, he was not only married, but the father of a baby, whose eyes bid fair to be larger, rounder, and of a lighter blue than his own.

CHAPTER IV.

"Never rail at the world—it is just as we make it;
We see not the flower if we sew not the seed;
And as for ill-luck, it is just as we take it—
The heart that's in earnest no bars can impede.
You question the justice that governs man's breast,
And say that the search for true friendship is vain;
But remember this world, though it be not the best,
Is next to the best we shall ever attain."

CHARLES SWAIN.

SAD as Emily's troubles have been, Mrs. Robarts was much more to be pitied. With the power to confer every blessing, wealth bears about with it some strange and subtle faculty that hardens even the fingers that touch it. There is no softness in the ring

of it—'tis a merciless demander of the strictest balance; it will not give trust, it has no faith, it knows its own value, and it buys up every good under the sun, with a glittering, cold defiance of any other power being able to outbid it. 'Tis sordid, even when most full; 'tis selfish, when open-handedness exacts less trouble than withholding; 'tis a master the most haughty—a slave the most abject; in some hands a god, in others a curse.

Mr. and Mrs. Robarts were undergoing the trial of wealth. Her heart was tender and womanly. Wealth had no power to make it hard and selfish; but it contracted it to feebleness, handing it over to the various absurdities of an irrational will, that had no restrictions from the want of wealth.

Money was so far as a god to her, that any whim could be gratified; and if she became too subservient to its power, and thought that money could give those

she loved better than herself health, happiness, and virtue, she was not so blamable as her husband.

On him riches fell with blighting power. Having made his own fortune, he might be pardoned some little pride; but having proved himself able to make it, he had the greater trial of learning how to spend it well. Of this he was incapable.

Disregardful of the bountiful emptying of fortune's favours on his own head, he grasped in envy at those held out to others.

The more full his coffers, the more envious he became lest others should surpass him. And then, hardest trial of all, the idleness of wealth smote him with a worse disease. Always active, energetic, clever, he knew not what to do with his leisure.

He tried farming. That was tame work: turning up the common earth with so

much toil, reaping but one harvest a year, and that yielding a per-centage scarcely worth the reckoning, was child's play to the brain that dealt with the teeming bowels of the earth, changed his hundreds into thousands within a month, and gathered his harvests from the brains of men, without the need to care for wind and weather.

Mr. and Mrs. Robarts tried a season in London. Had they lived to these days, they might have succeeded in obtaining a certain place in society, and occupying themselves in fulfilling the duties of it.

But money was not the only passport necessary, thirty years ago, to get into London life. Rank, blood, learning, and statesmanship were all more or less requisite, and among these Mr. Robarts had no chance. And his wife, gentle, pretty, and lady-like, was yet so wholly absorbed in her own family, she was incapable of

making the least effort merely for society.

Thus their experience of London was rather more than disheartening — it was wholly distasteful..

So they took up their abode at Cheltenham, then rising from a pretty, healthy village into a beautiful rural town.

They did not give up their house in the Valley of the Hundred Fires, as Mr. Robarts had still very large interests vested in the iron works, which now and then required his attention; besides, Mrs. Robarts, whose matrimonial speculations for her daughters had never slumbered, always meant to return to Tymawr, when their former employers (now equals), the Bernards, came back.

Frank Bernard attained his majority; and to soften the disappointment that the family did not return home to celebrate it, promises had been made that nothing should be wanting to do so when they

once more had the happiness to find themselves among their kind neighbours.

Mrs. Robarts had missed her sympathizing friend, Mrs. Leslie, very much at first; and though she made some sociable acquaintances among those with whom she now dwelt, she was fain to acknowledge to herself there was not one who could fill her place. Those whom her good taste led her to select as friends, were not disposed to keep up more than a visiting acquaintance with one whose ideas never strayed from her own household. And others, upon whom she was at last thrown, had interested motives, sufficiently plain to be seen even by herself.

And yet never had she wanted a true friend so much as now.

Mr. Robarts, having no other amusement, was fast becoming a *bon vivant*, entailing upon himself and all those around him the evils of a disordered liver, and the peevishness of a man never pleased.

His irritability towards his children had caused the first serious quarrel between himself and Mrs. Robarts, and it appeared to give him no qualms at all to extend his ill-temper to herself.

Their eldest boy had always been a trouble and disappointment, which evil appeared to increase with his years. The second was steadier and more amiable, but easily led astray by his brother.

Two of the elder girls, as has been notified in this history, died. There still remained three, of the ages of nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one—Jane and Maria, the two eldest, both extremely pretty; Eliza Mary the third, sadly disfigured by weak eyes and stunted growth.

There was a nursery full of little ones of all ages, and it may be inferred that Jane and Maria lacked suitors for their hands—partly because, with all Mr. Robarts's reputed wealth, there were too many

among whom to divide it; and partly because Mrs. Robarts had early fixed her heart upon a husband for one of them, and therefore gave little encouragement to any others.

The reason she reserved these two for but one fortunate individual was their contrast to each other. They could very well have enacted Minna and Brenda, as regarded complexion and hair—so that, if one failed to please, the other would be certain of admiration. But they were not of the same mind as their mother. They liked a little flirtation very much, and would have been glad to leave their luxurious home, their many pleasures, their fond mother, for any fate, so that they might have change, and rid themselves of a monotonous life.

With these feelings no one was surprised, but their mother, at Jane's elopement with a young lieutenant whose regi-

ment at the very time was under orders for Canada.

The anguish and dismay of poor Mrs. Robarts were not mitigated by the harsh taunts of her husband, who, in vindicating his own warnings regarding her mode of education, was merciless in his upbraidings.

In the torment of her feelings she poured them all out in a letter to Mrs. Leslie, feeling unable to contain them within her own heart, yet being equally convinced she had not a friend near her who would truly sympathize with her. It was only when her letter was gone that she remembered how many of Emily's kind, sweet letters, so like herself, had remained unnoticed, almost unread. And when the day arrived on which she calculated upon an answer, and none came, she lay down weeping on her sofa, with the desolate feeling in her heart that she had not a

real friend in the world, and deserved to lose the one she most prized. Her wealth could buy her friends for the day—for mirth, for amusement—but was utterly incapable of providing her with one for adversity.

"I wish, oh! how I wish, we had never left the Valley; it appears as if nothing had prospered since we left it. I feel weak and low, longing to see my poor, misguided child; and yet Jaspar says I must not do so, for the sake of the others. And she will leave this country soon—I may never see her again. How I am tossed about between right and wrong! If Mrs. Leslie had been at hand she would have settled everything in her nice, bright way—she would have seen my poor Jane."

"Which she has done already, my dear friend," said that happy, gladdening voice, in the doorway. "Here I am, to answer your letter in person. And as I thought I

should be more welcome if I brought you some news of Jane, I went there first."

Her very voice gave an instant exhilaration to Mrs. Robarts's heart. She fell into her arms with a gush of grateful, happy tears, and acknowledged to herself, then and evermore, that wealth never brought her so great a boon as the simple, spontaneous feeling that prompted Emily to come so speedily to comfort her.

And what a halo of good she brought with her! How impossible was it to resist the contagion of her bright, hopeful spirit!

How she swept down impossibilities, overcame obstacles, ignored difficulties, and could and would see no grievances!

How Mr. Robarts stormed, argued, and railed against his daughter, vowing he would cast her off, give her no fortune, refuse to see her—and how, without knowing in what manner it was effected, he found himself promising Emily to forgive her. Not only

forgiving her, but seeing her; not only seeing her, but settling a yearly sum of money upon her, all of which was done.

Furthermore, Emily discovered that the young lieutenant was of very good family, and that they were disposed also to be kind to the young people and forgive them. And an interview was exchanged among them all, which caused his friends not to regret so much the hasty marriage, and made her friends glad that their pretty Jane was so admired, and likely to be loved by her new family.

And how this pretty Jane, heretofore silly, and wholly given to vanities, awakened up to a sense of very different things, and was heard promising her young spouse to be as good as Mrs. Leslie some day; and beseeching her young sisters never to follow her example, as it could only happen once in a life-time that so wrong a step should be so gently treated.

And how at last the mother parted hopefully from her daughter, cheered by her bright, happy smile from the coach-window, comforted by Emily's felicitous views of everything in general and Canada in particular, and pleasantly gratified by her husband's consideration and good humour—qualities that had been scarce with him of late years.

In truth, he could not withstand the influence of Emily's character.

Everything must be so right that occurred before her eyes—all people had need be so good that stood in her presence. For without seeming to see the cause, she administered the antidote—without hearing the unjust word, she was ready with the prompt assurance. Strong words, rude threats, angry wishes, melted like snow-flakes before the soft sweetness that never tired of saying—

"This must be done, because it is right."

CHAPTER V.

"There is a land, of every land the pride,
Beloved by Heaven, and all the world beside:
Where brighter suns dispense serener light,
And milder moons emparadise the night.
There is a spot of earth supremely blest—
A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest.

"Where shall that land, that spot of earth be found?
Art thou a man?—a patriot?—look around!
Oh! thou shalt find, howe'er thy footsteps roam,
That land thy country, and that spot thine home."

MONTGOMERY.

WHEN Emily returned home to John, and described all that had been done—how comfortable she had left Mrs. Robarts, how pretty and happy Jane had looked, how lovely were the little growing-up girls, how

pleasant it was to think that one of the elder ones was already married, and into such a good family, such excellent Tories —Mr. Marcel was sure of some place in the Ministry if those stupid Whigs were turned out, &c., &c.—John had a mind to have a little joke with her.

"It appears to me, Mrs. Leslie, that you, the mother of ten daughters, have been scandalously aiding and abetting two very naughty young people to elope."

"Not at all, John — they had eloped; afterwards there was nothing for it but to make the best of it. I was shocked at their eloping."

"Were you so? It appeared to me, from your description, that you almost lent them the money to go."

"John!—but Jane was very penitent, and so pretty. I do not wonder that her mother is so proud of her. Maria is also quite lovely in her way; and I daresay it

will be as Mrs. Robarts hopes—no young man can be blind to it."

"Now, you are enigmatical — planning another elopement?"

"Not at all, John, but Mrs. Robarts has always hoped one of her girls would be settled at the Castle—and a very good thing, too."

"For her, but not for my friend Frank; he must have a more sensible wife."

"Oh! Jane was wonderfully changed for the better, even in the short time she was married."

"Well, well, we will allow that—consider it granted that marriage will immediately make sensible women of very silly girls; but, Emily, be kind enough not to encourage any of our daughters to elope."

"Now, I am very angry, very angry indeed, that you should say such a thing, John. Our girls elope?—you know very well

they would do nothing of the sort, without asking our permission."

"If you will promise so much as that, I will endeavour to keep my mind easy. Otherwise, I thought of locking Gwladys up."

"Poor dear little Gwladys," laughed Emily, beginning to see John's solemn joke through the mist; "though she is nearly fifteen, I feel very certain she considers herself quite a child still."

"I do not know that—she is very fond of Hugh John."

This appearing a delightful joke to Emily, she left the room, laughing merrily, and glad in herself to think how light was the heart of her John. Indeed, Gwladys, Hugh John, and Regina were the most devoted of friends; for having lost her peculiar sister, Gwenny, Gwladys wandered about forlorn, until she made this compact of amity.

Regina could now ride alone upon a donkey, and was willing to go over all the world after this fashion, faithfully attended by Papa Hugh and dear "Gwlady."

Being somewhat in the secret of Emily's troubles concerning the lovers of her eldest daughters (Jeffreys not being able to stifle his share), and now earnestly called upon to grant Mrs. Robarts sympathy from the same cause, movingly pleaded by Emily herself, the two Mr. Sabines regarded their Regina with double interest.

"I have always wished," remarked Mr. Sabine, "to experience the feelings of every phase of life. I have been a son, a brother—lately I have had a sister, a wife. I am feeling what it is to be a father; some of these days I shall analyze the perceptions of a father-in-law. But choose well, my Regina, if you love me."

Regina thus apostrophized, looked up from the plate of sugared orange, prepared

for her most carefully by Papa Hugh, and interrupting her father's words according to her own notions, said deliberately—

"Me love Papa John."

And no explanations produced any other reply. Her nurse had given it out that Miss Sabine's nature was "positive," and in the present instance her words seemed verified.

"Therefore," murmured Mr. Sabine in high Dutch, or some such language, "this important matter must remain unsettled at present."

The more so as Aunt Margaret loudly declared she should shut the door in the face of any man who came with the base purpose of inveigling away the darling of her heart.

Now, Aunt Margaret was permitted to say this as often as she liked, and as loudly, without contradiction; "for," said the mamma, the most sensible among that

quartette composing Regina's court — "I never yet heard of any one wishing to marry a baby."

But now a rumour ran thrilling through the Valley, spreading joy and felicitations through the length and breadth of it.

The Bernards were coming home!

Anon, more rapturous grew the excitement—they were in England!

What bonfires played on every hill!—what joy-bells rung out from every tower!—what rushing, hurrying, skurrying!—they arrive at their long-deserted home this night! A rocket blazes in the air—shouts greet its dropping splendours, less from its own beauty than because it tells—"They are coming!"

Another on a nearer hill. "They are approaching!" Still another, so near, its luminous rain falls amid that sea of joyous faces. Then come the sound of distant cheers, seeming to waken echoes; but, unlike echoes,

dying away in the distance, they gathered fresh sound, fresh voices, fresh lungs, until now they are here! We cheer ourselves—we see four smoking steeds—a carriage—a gentle, tearful lady within, a delighted, well-known face, greeting every one—a young and handsome likeness of that face, moved, like his mother, with a touch of quivering emotion—a younger fellow, all smiles and happiness, cheering too with voice and hand, and answering the panting questions of the running crowd as they grasp the carriage door and hold on, at imminent risks, that they may have a word, take a hearty look, perhaps have a shake of the hand, one and all, well worth the struggle.

"Yes, this is he, your young lord to be," pulling Frank forward.—"Never were they better. Of course we have come home."—"Home for good? No, no; cannot promise that, but we will never stay

away so long again."—"Yes, never better—as strong as a horse, and never mean to be ill again."

These answers dispersed themselves through the crowd, amid chorusses of hearty cheers; while the original recipients of them were regarded with blended envy and admiration.

"Ah, Henry," said Lady Bernard that night, after gazing from their elevated position upon the illuminations, that shamed for once those roaring furnaces, and hearing the cheers and happy shouts of merriment and enjoyment, "Ah, Henry, how well are we repaid for all we have done here! More than ever do I feel what a sacred trust was given us, what a noble power placed within our keeping!"

"True, my wife; this hearty welcome home has made me in love with duty. We seem not to have worked in vain, for the effect of one long absence has

brought out the proofs of a strong affection in the people. They have missed us —we are necessary to them. We might not have discovered this, any more than they have found their want of us, but for the separation between us."

"How anxious they were to see our Frank! Did you hear that man say—'Which is the young lord—lets see if he has his father's face?' and his shout to the others, ''Tis right, all right—the very moral.' Dear Henry, how I pity those parents who feel that they leave the people who have belonged to them, who love them, to sons unworthy of the trust. We cannot say so. Surely I may not be taxed with maternal vanity if I say our Frank is worthy to succeed you."

"Dear wife, I bless God daily for the good promise breaking forth in the characters of both the sons you have given me. Did you see Mr. Leslie?"

"Yes, for a moment, as you shook hands with him. I have dreaded to see them again, after their great sorrow."

"They will not be changed, you need have no fear. He is thinking of the family preparing to meet him in Heaven; while she is so imbued with the spirit of Faith, Hope, and Charity, that nothing can move the first, nothing destroy the second, and nothing blunt the loving nature of the last. Here—I throw down my gage, and am ready to do battle on her behalf!"

"A silver sixpence, though new, is no great sum to stake in such a cause; but I conclude 'tis the spirit that gives the value—as such I accept the gage. Our welcome home will lose its chiefest charm if the Leslies have changed in any one particular from what we left them."

CHAPTER VI.

"For what is music, if sweet words
Rising from tender fancies be not so?
Methinks there is no sound so gentle, none,
Not even the south wind young, when first he comes
Wooing the lemon-flowers, for whom he leaves
The coasts of Baræ: not melodious springs,
Tho' heard i' the stillness of their native hills;
Not the rich viol, trump, cymbal, nor horn,
Guitar, nor cittern, nor the pining flute,
Are half so sweet as tender human words."

BARRY CORNWALL.

MR. AND MRS. LESLIE were among the earliest at the Castle, the next morning, with their welcomes and felicitations.

"Here, my lord, I return your gage. She either is a thousand times more engaging

than before, or my memory failed to remember her charming manner—her beaming countenance. And yet she has aged—there are silver hairs, and a line or two on that smooth forehead, which deepened as she spoke once—but once, in gentle submission—of their grief. And he, Mr. Leslie, did he say aught to you?"

"No; something irresistibly impelled me to observe that, though absent, I had grieved even as a father might—mourning still more for them. He could find no voice to reply, Kate; he trembled, shuddered, and turned his face from me; yet, ere I had forgiven myself for touching, even with friendly feeling, the wound of his heart, he had recovered, and, with unbroken voice, spoke of our boys, his former pupils. There is no envy in his nature. While his heart shrank from any condolence upon the death of his only one, he had nerve sufficient, nay a pleasure, in congratulating a happier father in the pos-

session of two such sons as mine. Oh! indeed, my wife, I could have melted into woman's tears, so touched was I with his simple resignation. They are changed, but, like refined gold, grief has brightened their characters, displaying fresh virtues."

But the Bernards had little time for this exchange of confidences. For a week or more they must consider themselves as public property—as spectacles to be admired, raree-shows, and objects devoutly loved and regarded. The old Welsh women came flocking in, laden with their stores of winter weaving—"For sartain sure as my lady's ladyship would buy." The knitters made a goodly show, and though Lady Bernard had neighbours and friends gathering round her of every degree, it may be questioned if she welcomed any more warmly than these old pensioners of hers, who remembered so well which pattern she liked best, and had striven during the long months of her absence to im-

prove in their primitive arts, stimulated thereto by no greater motive than her approbation.

Scarcely had the Bernards felt themselves at home, when Mr. Bernard, my lord's brother, had notice to leave Ty-mawr—all the Robartses were coming home.

"Now, then," said Lady Bernard, "we must issue our invitations. We owe a great debt of hospitality to the country, and we must pay the debt royally."

"Very good—but I thought you intended to wait for the Leslie girls coming home."

"They are to do so very soon. Oh, Henry, I am so anxious to see Pearl, because—"

"You need not excuse yourself by any 'because' to me, my lady. Just as if I cannot see all the elements of match-making rising in your mind."

"Ah! Henry, I think a mother feels more anxious when her son's weal or woe is

to be settled for life (as most men's are when they marry) than at any other time. If they were to marry unhappily I should hate my own sex, I fear."

"I wish them both to marry; and I care not how soon—for mate well or ill, they must wear and tear each other's feelings for a little, until they fit into shape, like a pair of old gloves, as you and I do. I won't pry further into your private schemes than to say I desire for Frank a pretty little fair girl, with a sweet simple heart, a moderate quantity of accomplishments, a happy disposition, a little common sense, and no money."

"Moderate, indeed, you are. Miss Hill is so full of her own little niece, she could say scarce a word of Pearl; and Mrs. Leslie, never praising anything that belongs to her, appears to think that all beauty, far and near, is concentrated in Maria Robarts."

"I demur against a Robarts. But send out the invitations. We must have a day

for our friends and acquaintances, a day for our work-people and tenants, and last, though not least, a day for the poor. Not a heart within reach but shall rejoice, even hereafter, in remembrance of the festivities given as his birthright, in honour of our son. As my father did for me, so shall I free the turnpikes that week, that all comers, goers, travellers, and strangers may carry forth the tidings how Welsh landlords inaugurate the admittance of their sons into the duties of society."

Begun in such a spirit, the sounds of preparation and the rumours of expectation waxed loud and wonderful.

Of course these extended to London, exciting the three Leslie girls into a great flutter of spirits, and sending Lady Armitage on various shopping expeditions, more impelled thereto by that kindest, most liberal heart, than any love of such an amusement. On the contrary, she had a rooted

aversion to such waste of time, rushing in and out of the shops as if an infectious epidemic was prevalent in all; selecting with prompt decision what she wanted, pointing it out, and declining any further show.

And yet, notwithstanding this apparent careless choice, what wonderfully beautiful things did this shopping produce for Nest and Pearl!

Imprimis, ball-dresses, exactly like Adeline's, with dress combs to match (then the fashion). Secondly, thirdly, and fourthly, silk pelisses of stone-coloured silk, bonnets of the same silk, drawn, lined with pink—gloves, shoes, collars, everything most complete, and all to match. The three girls were to go down, escorted only by the faithful old butler, as Sir Edward was not well, and Lady Armitage would no more leave him than let him undergo the journey. Consequently, they did not quit town until the very latest moment—

sleeping two nights on the road, that they might not look pale and fatigued, and arriving at the parsonage only on the morning of the day of the ball.

Delightful as was this anticipation, all was absorbed in the happiness of the meeting. Gwenny had returned about a fortnight before for her holidays, otherwise the assembling might perhaps have been too exciting.

As it was, the Babel of tongues drove papa fairly out of the house, and sent mamma into the study to catch a few quiet moments. But not before they had both of them looked at and welcomed their dear daughters with the fondest affection, and it must be told—pride. Though, indeed, Emily excused herself in that—was it not entirely owing to her sister that she had three such pretty daughters?

And John considered it no more than right to regard Emily's daughters with

peculiar favour. They all bore, in different ways, some resemblance to their mother. It was his duty to admire them.

Besides, he owed them a debt—the debt of doubt and misgiving, as to the value of daughters, that takes many years and vast interest to repay. He must begin from this very day.

Conversation picked out of the noise in the drawing-room.

Gwenny.—"Oh, there are such quantities of people at the Castle—and we are to be there!"

Gwladys.—"Lord Bernard insisted upon it, and we are to have blue sashes and blue shoes."

Gwenny.—"Anna and Elizabeth Robarts are asked also, and they have white silk dresses with flounces, and they—not older than us."

Gwladys.—"And Lady Bernard came down yesterday to see if you had arrived,

and she said she would have all the little ones to come for an hour in the music gallery to see us dancing, even Pussie. And the carriage is to come for them and to take them back, and us also."

Gwenny.—"And she asked me if you were as pretty as Maria Robarts, Pearl; and I said perhaps nearly as pretty, but not so tall—but Nessie was a great deal taller, almost a giantess."

Nessie (shocked).—"You little fibber, I will take away your blue shoes."

Gwenny (struggling with her budget of news, and taking Nest's threat for what it was worth—nothing).—"And two hundred and fifty people are asked to the ball, besides Gwladys and I."

Gwladys.—"And Lady Bernard hoped you three would be very nicely dressed; and she asked mamma, and mamma could not tell, and Lady Bernard was so surprised, and wondered she had not sent

orders about your dresses; and told her that Mrs. Robarts had been so particular, ordering Maria's dress from Paris—and it is most beautiful!"

Gwenny.—"And Gus has come home, worse than ever; and we are never more to call him Gus, but Gustavus—and he says he has come home to marry Pearl. But he shall not; say so, Pearl."

Pearl laughed, and the beautiful bloom rising in her cheeks, making her prettier than ever, the whole of the juveniles chorussed out a vehement protest against Mr. Gus's intentions.

Very happy was Emily to see that her darling Adeline entered with zest and enjoyment into all the amusements of the hour. A little sedate she was, and pale, but serene always—now and then (carried away by the general enthusiasm) almost merry. Especially when Miss Nest, as a preliminary to the ball, insisted upon a

little racing up and down the Cinder Tip.

"Otherwise," observed she, philosophically, "we should hardly think ourselves at home."

Lady Bernard, if the truth must be told, was a little nervous. Placing all confidence in the reader, it is as well to allow she was vexed to see Maria Robarts not only so pretty, but so refined and elegant; while the two sisters just below her were buds of beauty, promising to surpass her in every way. She took herself to account every moment for having thrown such temptation in the way of her sons before they had seen Pearl.

"You appear troubled, my wife," said Lord Bernard, suddenly alighting upon her, in the midst of all the bustle and preparation.

"Did you ever expect to see any of the Robartses surpass the Leslie girls, Henry?"

"Upon my word, I was foolish enough to do so, Kate, considering the pains and anxieties they have cost their mother, and the little trouble that has been taken with the others."

"But in reality you do not think so?"

"Pardon me—you speak, of course, regarding the outside. But this fit of match-making is becoming too strong. Rely upon it, the young man for whose welfare you appear so anxious will choose for himself; and as I have been flattered by hearing that he resembles me, make yourself easy, he will no doubt select an excellent wife."

So Lady Bernard endeavoured to think no more, until many people already assembled, she chanced to hear the unmistakable tones of Mrs. Leslie's voice in the hall.

"Beautiful, most beautiful!" was she saying; but alas! she was only praising the

decorations, and was only accompanied by her younger children, who were all radiantly happy, and still laughing at papa's parting joke, who, perceiving the amount of vanity engendered in the minds of his little daughters consequent upon the blue sashes and blue shoes, thought to dash it by saying:—

"He should have admired them all much more had they also worn blue gloves."

Now, no such things as blue gloves were known in those days, so papa's damper was received with derisive triumph.

"How do the girls look?" asked Lady Bernard.

"Oh, so well!" answered our Emily, as excited about the evening's amusements as the youngest of her daughters; "what lovely flowers!—how beautifully the hall is lighted and the floor chalked with the arms, I see."

In those days, good reader, it was the

fashion to chalk the ball-room floors in different coloured chalks, after the manner of the pattern of a carpet, a fashion inconvenient, choking, and detrimental.

"Are they grown—pretty?" Lady Bernard was going to say; but Emily, ready to answer anything, said—

"Very much grown, Nessie particularly; quite above her papa; so delighted, they will be here directly with their papa. Oh! here is Mrs. Robarts, and dear Maria; how lovely she looks!"

Now, Lady Bernard, for want of some better mode of expressing her vexation, could have wished Mrs. Leslie was a little girl, capable of being reprimanded, and put into the corner. Also Maria Robarts did look lovely, in white lace and silver trimmings; and the whole family made a very pretty family group. Mr. Robarts, though large and somewhat bloated, had a handsome presence, well befitting the companionship

of the elegant, somewhat fragile figure by his side.

Also the children were all pretty, and fashionably dressed, and the only one who might have spoilt the group, Gustavus, was not there. He took a long time to adorn, he said, but would follow soon in his own landaulette. Now Gus, as he had hitherto always been called—Gustavus, as he is now to be styled—was a youth of decided bad taste. If he had to be designated by the popular language of the present day, he would be defined "a snob."

The next arrivals were the Sabines, and Miss Hill, Regina enthroned on papa Hugh's shoulders, and surveying everything with truly royal composure.

She was handed over to the strict ward and watch of Gwladys and Gwenny, who conveyed her up to the music-gallery, where she would be enabled, between whiles of gazing on the spectacle below, to inter-

change a little baby play with Pussie—a pastime much delighted in by the Lady Regina. On occasions like these she condescended to be a mere baby, and her hearty laugh and childish merriment sounded like angels' music to four pairs of ears.

CHAPTER VII.

"You've sat the night out, Masters! See the moon
Lies stranded on the pallid coast of morn."

A. SMITH.

LADY BERNARD was greeting the Dawson party, Jeffreys nervous, and red, and hot; he was about to see that wild Nest again, for the first time since the race they had had. And Bessie Trumps, his dear little, neat, bright-eyed wife (who never was called anything but Bessie Trumps by everyone, because she was considered so deservedly a little trump), Bessie Trumps was quite concerned for him. She longed to catch hold of the tall, stately Nest, and, creep-

ing up as high as her ear, beseech her to be very kind and good to dear Jef.; and, if it would not be very, very disagreeable, just to dance once with him. A true wife was Betty Trumps. She considered it not only a duty, but a pleasure, to adore whatever Jef. adored; and if he thought it necessary to have an object to worship, as heathens worshipped their divinities in benighted days, she regarded it as much of good taste on his part to admire such a dear, beautiful creature as Nessie Leslie. Bessie being *petite*, exquisitely neat, and a living, breathing embodiment of the word method, of course doted upon all tall, rambling, scrambling, wild, untidy creatures.

But to return to Lady Bernard. She heard her eldest son utter an exclamation, and dart from her side—she saw Jeffreys start, and then rumple his hair with his hand. She perceived Mr. Leslie coming forward, spectacles

on nose; but in a moment the prettiest, freshest, sweetest face that ever belonged to a girl of seventeen summers was put up to hers to be kissed, and very fondly did she do it. There never had been, there never was, there never could be, anything to equal Pearl; and though her colour rose at the unmistakable admiration of every eye, the sweet, ingenuous countenance—so like her mother's—beamed with soft intelligence and girlish happiness.

And while Lady Bernard gazed so fondly upon her, Nest was exciting admiration on her side. Jeffreys had just responded to Bessie's whispered exclamation, "She is more beautiful than ever!" when Nest espied them.

Kissing Bessie after her usual fashion, and holding out her hand in the frankest cordiality to Jeffreys, it was out of all reason evermore to consider that race as anything but a dream.

"And, Jeffreys, do dance with me the first country dance, and Bessie will of course have to dance with the doctor—he would not be happy without it—and then you will stand next to me, and I shall be able to tell you all I am dying to say."

Jeffreys and his Bessie exchanged glances of the most unqualified pleasure, which found words, as Nest had to turn and be welcomed by Lady Bernard. As that lady looked at the three girls, dressed very simply in white crape, their magnificent hair rolled into many shining bows, as was then the fashion, and fastened with pearl combs, she felt quite a thrill of pleasure that the Valley of a Hundred Fires should produce such beautiful specimens of girlhood; and she hastened to introduce them, with a sort of proud vanity, to her noble guests, saying, "Our rector's daughters!"

They were all three very different; and

if they had each their own peculiar style, still in all was to be seen that simple, artless expression which threw a charm over all they did or said.

If anything, Pearl had a more settled grace in all her movements, showing her girl's shyness during the introductions that ensued more by her changing colour than her manner.

"My dear Mrs. Leslie," exclaimed Lady Bernard, the first moment she could obtain a word with that genial lady," "you ought to be thoroughly ashamed of yourself, not to be conceited, and proud, and vain, as the mother of three of the sweetest girls I ever saw."

"Ah!" answered Emily, smiling and blushing too, "John has just been here, congratulating me upon my three pretty daughters—and indeed they do look very nice. My sister gave them those beautiful dresses, and they are very becoming."

"Becoming! really I must go and seek Margaret Hill; she at least will be more comprehensive and complacent than you, in her ideas of our god-daughter: everybody is asking me who they are. Your sister deserves great credit in this; they owe to her wise rules, I am sure, those pure complexions and fresh, healthy looks. With all her prettiness, Maria looks jaded by Adeline and Nest; as for Pearl——"

Here Lady Bernard paused and smiled: she saw a dark curly head bent over Pearl's seat, talking most earnestly; and, as if that was not sufficient to delight her, a voice, seemingly as well pleased, spoke in her ear:—

"I am content, my lady; you may publish the bans next Sunday."

Of course the ball was very successful; but as to who was the happiest and enjoyed it most, it was hard to say.

There were the little girls up in the gallery. When the smallest lot had to go away,

Gwladys and Gwendoline were to come downstairs and dance with each other, if permitted. Thinking of this was in itself a happiness; but when they saw their three sisters dancing, Adeline with Mr. Bernard, Pearl with Mr. Walter Bernard, and Nest with so tall a young man that she looked quite little by his side, and they all nodded and smiled, and kissed their hands to them, that was ecstasy. And when that dance was over, how surprised they were to hear some one speaking to them, and looking behind, saw Walter Bernard and Nest's tall partner, who bore in their hands various delicious bon-bons; and how Nest's partner sat down among them, and inquired all their names; and how he told them he had been dancing with a Welsh princess, with whom he was very much in love.

"She is no princess—she is only our Nessie," answered Winifred; "and she won't be fallen in love with."

"Why not?"

"Because she does not like it; she ran away once."

"Hush, Winny," interposed Gwenny; "you must say no more. No one knows that we know."

"Now, I am going to dance with a beautiful Pearl; may I fall in love with her?"

"Oh, if you please, don't," remonstrated Lily; "she is our Pearl, and no one must be in love with her but us."

"That is very hard indeed for me, unless I may love you."

"Yes, if you please; we shall be very glad if you will love us all."

The tall gentleman smiled, and was about to speak, when Wilsy announced the carriage waiting for the little ones."

"But *we* are to go downstairs, and if anyone asks us, we may dance," observed Gwenny, laying a marked stress on the pronoun.

"I am delighted to hear it," said the tall gentleman. "Now, you must permit me to escort you down, and afterwards I hope you will each honour me with your hands in a dance."

Gwenny cast a glance of triumph at Wilsy, as they both joyfully assured him they would dance as many times with him as he liked.

One of the happiest groups in the ball-room were the Dawsons. Jeffrey's hair was on end with delight. Everybody he asked, and his own family in particular, whom he repeatedly called upon to reiterate the fact, declared they had never seen so fine a girl as Nest; and in spite of her being so admired, and getting so many partners, she was always running up to exchange a word with Bessie Trumps, laugh with the doctor, coax Mrs. Dawson, and be wholly and entirely a delicious darling.

"But, Dolly," whispered the Doctor,

"there isn't such a neat little figure in the rooms as our Bessie Trumps!"

"Or so light a dancer," responded his wife.

"And where she learnt it is the wonder."

"'A light heart makes light heels,' doctor; look at her now regarding Jeffreys —such a pretty, wife-like look."

The Sabines were amazingly happy.

"I have experienced many different scenes of life, but I do not know if I ever underwent the sensation of dancing. Sister Margaret, will you venture a turn with me?"

"Indeed, I won't, John," answered sister Margaret, in her usual uncompromising manner; "a pretty pair we should be."

"It appears very easy, sister Margaret," he began.

"If you please, Mr. Sabine," interrupted a small voice near, "I shall like to dance with you very much."

"Would you, Gwendoline?" answered he with alacrity; "let us go then; I long to experience the effect—and we can converse in German the while."

"Don't do any such thing, Gwenny," remarked Mrs. Sabine; "but mind your steps, and take heed to your partner—you will have enough to do."

Mr. Hugh John followed the strange pair, partly to admire his brother as a dancer, and imbibe some of the pleasures of that amusement through his agency, and partly to assist Gwenny, in case of any eccentricity on the part of Mr. Sabine.

The Robartses also enjoyed themselves very much. The sight of so many old friends, recalling his early days of successful toil, and consequent happiness, with their cordial greeting, brought back to Mr. Robarts an agreeable flow of spirits, unadulterated by one drop of spleen.

Mrs. Robarts gained many pretty compliments concerning her children, who enjoyed themselves greatly. Maria, though not naturally wise, on the contrary rather silly, was a proficient in small talk; and even if she had not this little accomplishment, her beauty was sufficient to ensure her plenty of partners, if only for the pleasure of looking at her.

Mr. Gustavus was the only one not perfectly at ease. Yet he was dressed in the very height of fashion, and roamed about with a supercilious air, highly diverting to some people. After supper (a misfortune that was not singular in those benighted days) his superciliousness gave place to rudeness. All the little wit he had being overmastered by more potent means, his natural temperament broke loose, and developed itself without restraint.

Walter Bernard was talking to Nest's

tall partner, a young Scotch baronet, by name Sir Ralph Cuthbertson.

"Why did you not prepare me for seeing so many pretty girls, Walter? My heart has been severely wounded three or four times to-night. 'Tis too much to expose a poor wild North Briton to the charms of your Welsh maidens, unless you put him on his guard."

"Which among them has made the deepest wound."

"I was especially struck when I came in with that fair girl; but I soon recovered that wound—she has a fatally foolish giggle. I then danced with a graceful, intelligent girl, who pleased me by her sweet beaming face—but she, I could perceive, has a pre-occupied heart. Her eyes looked beyond me; and while I was thinking this, there came flying by us a magnificent creature, dressed like my partner, but in no other way resem-

bling her. I asked to be introduced. There was something so naïve about this one, so fresh and original, that I own to a very severe wound. But I perceived a third, dressed in the same dress. Now before she even spoke I was struck quite through my heart."

"That is Pearl."

"But who are these girls? Did this country really produce them, or was Lady Bernard moved to send to Mythland for them?"

"They belong to us—they are the daughters of our clergyman."

"Then I consider him a fortunate man—except that he will soon lose them."

"He has plenty in reserve."

"Ah! so he has—I have made the acquaintance of some of them. They all have that delightfully fresh, artless manner; but what's the row?" They both sprang to the spot.

Mr. Gustavus was discovered in the passionate clutch of Frank Bernard, who appeared rather beside himself with rage. Pearl stood opposite, her blue eyes flashing, her cheeks glowing; but as still and motionless as a startled fawn.

"She promised to dance with me," gasped Gustavus.

"You are in no state to dance with a lady, sir," retorted Frank.

"That is nothing to you—a lady should keep her promise," answered the other.

The little stately Pearl, her beautiful nose dilated with a maidenly scorn, murmured—

"I dance only with gentlemen." Then seeing Lord Bernard advancing, she withdrew at once.

"Now, can you wonder, Walter, if I am wounded through the heart," remarked Sir Ralph, after Mr. Gustavus had been removed by Lord Bernard's orders.

"No, of all the sisters I like dear little Pearl the best, fortunately with a brother's love. Take my advice, and think only of Nessie. Pearl would die transplanted to your ice and snow—now the other is just suited for a laird's wife."

"Thank you for the hint; I will not poach upon Frank's manors, if I can help it. Meantime, there can be no harm in a little genuine admiration. Surely this must be their mother. Introduce me, Walter."

CHAPTER VIII.

"Man walks in a vain shadow: he
Disquieteth himself in vain,
The things that were shall be again;
The rivers do not fill the sea,
But turn back to their secret source,
The winds, too, turn upon their course."

ELLEN ALLEYN.

WE have had to dwell upon the ball, because it led to consequences. It was a *fête* never forgotten by some parties. It was not so much one, as a series of *fêtes*, all of which tended to bring those who had hitherto been strangers, even to each other's names, into so much intimacy that they lost sight of this fact, and began to

consider themselves friends of the earliest standing.

And in the different entertainments that followed the county ball, given to the tenants and the poor, all willing, amiable, gay creatures were at a premium. In this particular the Leslie girls were invaluable; and profiting by the demand for such beings, the sapient Gwenny became all ears and eyes, and exhibited such a genius, not to say inspiration, for being always in the right place at the proper time, that she managed to bring Gwladys and herself into the very presence of everything that was going on.

What a wonderful sight was the presentation of the addresses to the young heir! Magnificent teams of horses, drawing mighty waggons, on which reposed bucolic forms, gaily caparisoned and adorned, but the startling rigidity of death vividly seen through all. These were the oxen pre-

sented by the different tenants, and intended to be distributed among the poor. Anon came sheep in the same anomalous position. These were followed by the native band of musicians, who came up from the bowels of the earth, no mean professors—then the tenants, two and two—then spectators, crowding one over the other, to hear and see everything.

Then the addresses themselves—touching even the unconcerned with a passing emotion that did their hearts good even for that short space of time. The sudden shower of tears that bathed Lady Bernard's face as they spoke of her husband, his deeds, his virtues, their love — and the look of gratified delight that overspread his countenance as they alluded, with delicate tact but infinite affection, to her, as much their pride, their idol, as she might be to him. Very sincere was Frank's gleam of delight as they hoped

their lord and lady might be long spared to them. Very ardent his expression when they trusted he might prove worthy to succeed them. Very shy, abashed, when they spoke of himself, but looking up once in sudden pleasure, as high above all rose his brother's voice amid the universal cheering.

Then his reply, low, faltering—the missing word, prompted in his ear by that same dear voice; then the sudden flow of thoughts that came welling up from the over-full heart, nature and feeling overthrowing all barriers, and the loud hurrahs that greeted this burst of genuine fervour, not so dear to him as his mother's tender word of praise, or his father's look of approbation.

All these things passed, but left their impressions, various as the various hearts on which they fell. It is in scenes like these that the true character can be traced.

Thus, though Mrs. Leslie had cried with joy and smiled with happiness, leaving her face in a very doubtful condition, she was an object of highest admiration to Sir Ralph Cuthbertson.

"Such a genuine, true woman!" said he to his friend Walter; "she felt everything just as if she was his mother."

"Of course; Frank and I always consider her a sort of mother."

"Then does she expect, think you, a connexionship between the family, that you may be her sons in deed?"

"Not she: at this moment I verily believe she is persuading herself that Frank admires Maria Robarts. You can find it out, being no relation, if you have any wits about you. If anything, she is in a sort of league with the girl's mother to bring the match about."

"I will take some opportunity of discovering the truth of this idea of yours;

meantime, I wish to ask you a question. Have you fixed your affections on any of the Leslie girls?"

"Make yourself easy, my friend. I like them all—I like them so much that I want one to be my sister, another the wife of a friend; but I am going to wait until the young ones grow up, before I think of a wife for myself. There is a little one in the nursery, with brown velvet eyes, who has solemnly lisped out that she will be my wife some of these days. For the rest, pick and choose."

Sir Ralph was not able to discover much from Mrs. Leslie's words regarding her match-making propensities; but her manœuvres were as transparent as glass, and he was much amused at the earnestness with which she devoted herself to the matter, and her happy unconsciousness of the fact. Even Mrs. Robarts was wise enough to see that her pretty Maria did

not look so pretty when in the company of those three blooming lively maidens, who were always ready for everything; who worked hard all day, running messages, making up decorations, taking long walks, carrying large parcels—who danced all night, and yet, as that pitiless unmasker of candle-light gauds, the sun, peeped in and exposed them in high revelry, did they not appear as blooming as ever, and, instead of going to bed faded, worn-out, half-dead, were over the hills for a brisk walk, or cantering away on the downy moors, returning like winter roses.

"Surely, my dear friend," whispered Mrs. Robarts low in Emily's ear, "your girls must have some little art, some milk-of-roses that they use; Pearl's cheek has not a natural bloom on it."

"Oh, yes!" answered our naughty Emily, who ought to have quarreled with

Mrs. Robarts on the spot, "it is all perfectly natural. Pearl always had that peculiar colour."

And she said it in a voice that appeared wishful to apologize for Pearl's beautiful bloom.

"And they have no milk-of-roses—nothing of the sort; but my sister is very particular. They must go out, wet or dry, for five or six miles; they are not allowed wine, and they plunge into baths of cold water every day."

"Cold water!—every day!" cried Mrs. Robarts.

No wonder she returned home meditative. No Robarts had ever walked two miles, or left the house unless the sun shone blazingly. All the Robartses had wine, ale, strong soups, rich meats—in fact, the least little Robarts of all had been heard to call for sauces of which the mother of all the little Leslies knew not the exist-

ence. As for water, cold water, that exquisite, dashing, acute, poignant, delirious plunge into a cold bath—it was utterly unknown to any Robarts!

Never had they experienced the delightful sob, the delicious gasp, the tingling ecstasy of that daring feat, a plunge into cold water, emerging therefrom all glowing smiles, all rosy sparkles, every drop of blood racing, throbbing, and dancing like sparkling champagne. Certainly Mrs. Robarts had a great deal to learn—especially that the best milk of roses was cold water. No wonder the Leslie girls had such a bloom. The pure blood had no time to become torpid—dull; it flowed freely with every thought of their hearts. Three weeks passed away in one round of excitement and gaiety.

Of course Emily, having her home duties, and also much pre-occupied with the little match-making scheme, had not been much with the young people. She was one of

those who never fancied evil; and, satisfied that her girls were in good and numerous company, pleased to see how useful they made themselves, she resigned herself to the pleasing occupation of thinking each day was happier than the last, and that evils, and troubles, and strife were not known now upon the earth.

But Adeline—the wise, discreet, experienced Adeline—began to fear there was a little cloud rising, at present no bigger than a man's hand.

Why did Sir Ralph and Nest always get together? Why, when they rode, did his Welsh pony always happen to be related, either by birth, education, or companionship, to Nest's, so that, do what the riders would, these ponies would not keep apart? And it is well known that Welsh ponies originally must have imbibed a strong dose of obstinacy from their constant companions, the mules, if indeed those poor,

much-abused animals did not inherit their predilection for firmness from those very Welsh ponies in direct line.

But to return to Sir Ralph and Nest. If she had to go a message, up to the Castle, down to Nythvar, into the town, was she not certain to be seen by, escorted by, brought back by, Sir Ralph? And in the many dances going on it did not appear to Adeline that they ever danced apart. If they had other partners, they were either *vis-à-vis* or side by side.

Poor, dear, sweet Adeline, feelingly alive to the young beginnings of love, and anxious that her great, artless, happy, unthinking Nest should never experience a thorn in her day of sunshine, scarcely knew what to do.

"You must not dance so much with Sir Ralph," whispered she one evening to Miss Nessie; "don't you know it is flirting?"

"Oh!" said that young maiden, unblush-

ingly turning to Sir Ralph, "hear what Adeline says—she says we are flirting. Do you think so?"

"No," answered he, smiling to Nest, colouring before Adeline.

"I thought flirting," continued that frank-hearted young lady, "had to do with love, and all that. Did not you, Sir Ralph?"

"I—I believe so," answered he, stammering.

"There, you see, Adeline, we cannot be flirting—because, because, you know, we are not thinking anything of that sort."

And Miss Nest had the grace to blush as she heedlessly slipt out this apology. Girls were not so shrewd in those days as now.

Adeline, finding her first essay at putting matters straight only made them more crooked, looked smilingly satisfied with this answer, though secretly much chagrined. Her enlightenment as to the vagaries of

the human heart only made her the more conscious that Nessie's position was critical. In fact, like Adeline herself, the warmth of heart possessed by all the Leslies was so great, they gave them away almost before they knew what it was to have one. And Adeline was not quite sure about Sir Ralph. He appeared to her rather a scapegrace of a young man. He was lively, rattling, off-hand. Now Mr. Badinell was sedate, grave; his heart in his least word. No wonder Adeline felt all her own griefs once again, in anticipation for poor Nessie. Also she was very sensitive for that at present heedless young creature. She hardly ventured, even in her own thoughts, to whisper that Nessie might love, yet not be loved again. Consequently, though she longed for advice, a confidant she was scrupulous in seeking for this consolation.

On no account could it be papa. Good

as he was, he was a man, and would not understand.

It must be mamma—unconcerned as she appeared, and highly charmed with everything and every-body, she must be awakened from this pleasing dream, and shown a pitfall, dangerous and deep, just beneath the footfall of one of her good girls.

And mamma awoke terribly shocked.

"Dear, dear, what a foolish young man! My darling Adeline, how thoughtful and good of you! But I thought he was going away?"

"He was, mamma; but because he is going to stay longer, I thought I ought to tell you."

"Quite right, my dear, good child; thank you, thank you, my dear. But he is very wrong, very wrong indeed; and I thought him such a pleasing young man, so nice-looking and good. But I will go up to Lady Bernard in the morning, and beg her

to send him away. I am angry, quite angry with him—and I don't care if we never see him again."

(Oh, unkind Mrs. Leslie!)

CHAPTER IX.

"Jubilate! I am lovéd!
So dearly loved that till I prayed
I was more than half afraid:—
Lord! forgive my sins, and make
Me pure and good, for his dear sake."

ELIZABETH YOUATT.

BUT Lady Bernard proved for once in her life quite unfriendly.

"Why should she send away the son of her oldest friend, merely because he liked talking and walking with the girls? She would have been much ashamed of him if he had not done so?"

"Very true, certainly—only he was a very nice, very handsome young man; and

if Nest—that is, any of the girls—were to fall in love with him, what a pity it would be!"

"Not at all a pity; why should not he fall in love, as well as Frank, who is expected to be deeply enamoured of a certain young lady not a hundred miles off."

Mrs. Leslie blushed consciously, and was for a moment confused at this sudden *exposé* of her secret sentiments; but she rallied bravely, and spiritedly remarked:—

"But he ought to marry and settle."

"And why not Ralph Cuthbertson?"

"Oh! certainly, why not?—indeed, she would be very glad to hear he was going to be married—very glad, indeed—"

"But not to one of your girls?"

"Dear Lady Bernard, he would not think of one of my girls; they are dear, excellent children, but their father and I scarcely expect them to marry; there are so many of them, and we have nothing to give

them; and as for Sir Ralph, he is, of course, far above any of them."

"Then you must forbid Nest, or whichever one it is, from falling in love with him; for as to sending him away, I won't."

So Emily departed, murmuring to herself, "She is a very good, dear, obedient girl" —but further than that, she murmured no more; she had a little conception in her heart that love was a disease that seldom obeyed anything save its own wayward whims. But she was considerably comforted by hearing very happy laughter on the Cinder Tip, and perceiving her great, supposed love-sick Nessie was the perpetrator of this laugh. Furthermore, she was racing up and down, Pussie and Joan in either hand, confiding themselves with reckless delight to her strong clasp, which brought them safely to the bottom, in a terrific swoop that rendered their poor little

legs wholly valueless as propelling machines. But that was the charm.

Satisfied that Nessie was yet heart-whole, Mrs. Leslie comforted herself with her favourite maxim, "Let things settle themselves."

But this fatal confidence, this near approach to the unhappy doctrine of Fatalism, met its due reward.

Again Adeline spoke, at the end of a week.

"She feared Nessie was unhappy. She was cross, not so much with the little ones, but with her, Adeline, and Pearl. Pearl had spoken to her, had said Nessie showed her liking for Sir Ralph too openly. If any one ever was to love Pearl, he must show it for a year at least; he must prove it by devotion, by constancy, by irrevocable vows, ere she even extended as much as her little finger by way of encouragement. Nessie resented this; she

was angry, she flouted at Pearl, and then would not speak to her. Finally, she ended in weeping bitterly; and now she was gone out of the house by herself, and would not walk or talk with any one; and if she met Sir Ralph in that mood, and he questioned her, it was out of all probability that Nessie would refrain from repeating the exact truth."

And the gentle, maidenly Adeline shuddered as she thought what would be Sir Ralph's private opinion of Nessie after this.

"My dear Adeline, don't distress yourself—dry your tears, love, we will send Nessie away; as Sir Ralph won't go, she shall. Indeed, it was very wrong of us to leave your aunt alone to nurse your uncle. I am quite ashamed when I think of it. Nessie shall go immediately—her aunt wants her; she ought to have gone before. Send her to me, dear child, when

she comes in; I feel sure she will be delighted to go."

Reiterating this opinion a good many times, as if the more she did so, the more truth there was in it, Mrs. Leslie kissed Adeline, and they parted.

It was not until dressing-time that the young delinquent made her appearance in her mother's presence, knocking at the door with a knock most guilty in its tremulousness.

Emily's cheerful "come in!" disclosed a figure quite consonant with the knock.

Blushing crimson and paling white with extreme rapidity, Nessie stood with downcast eyes before her mother.

"Well, my darling," said that good mother, becoming quite as flushed, but resolved upon doing the deed to be done with unflinching spirit, "have you had a pleasant walk?"

This was to put Nessie at ease; but, on

the contrary, it had quite the opposite effect. So, rushing on, Mrs. Leslie continued—

"We have had a letter — no, we have not had a letter—but we think, dear, it is very wrong to leave your aunt only to nurse your good uncle; you have had a very happy and pleasant time, and I know you will be pleased now to go back and help to take care of him until Adeline can come —won't you, dear?"

Expecting the usual reply of prompt obedience common to the young Leslies, Emily was aghast at hearing a strangled—

"Oh, no, mamma!"

"But, my dear, dear child," exclaimed that mamma, plunging headlong into the subject so dreaded, so intended to be avoided; "you must go—that is a very naughty young man—he is a flirt, a very wicked thing——"

"Oh, no, mamma!"

"Yes, he is, my dear; there are a great many of them in the world. They go about making believe that they like some young girls so much that they intend to marry them; but it is quite a mistake—they mean, like Sir Ralph, just nothing at all."

"Oh, no, mamma!"

By this time Nessie's tears were flowing.

"Don't, my darling, pray don't cry; you will soon get over it—he is very, very wicked. I shall speak to Lady Bernard about him."

"But Lady Bernard gave him leave to do it."

"To do what, my Nessie?"

"To say it. He wished to speak before, but she said it was too soon."

"To say what, my child?"

"Mamma, to say he—he—loves me; he has gone to ask papa if we might be married."

"Are you sure, Nessie?"

"Oh, yes, mamma."

And the gleam from Nessie's shy eyes made up for more words.

Emily sat down. A moderate dose of anything good or pleasant she could bear with standing composure; but the amount of gratified vanity and maternal pride, together with an entire freedom from fear regarding her daughter's happiness, overwhelmed her for the moment. Then came the shock, the dread lest, in precipitancy of joy, Nessie might herself be blinded.

"But you love him, my child?"

"Yes, mamma."

Low as the words were spoken, still more expressive was the one sudden uplifting of the drooping eyelids.

Touched instantaneously by the fervour and hope of that look, Emily clasped her child in her arms, and kissing her tenderly, whispered words of gratulation and delight.

"I always liked him. I was so sorry to think ill of him; he is the nicest, most charming young man."

And so she ran on, utterly unconscious of the sad words she had so lately uttered.

"May I go and tell Pearl?" whispered Nest.

Aud with two or three more fervent kisses she was suffered to go, Mrs. Leslie intending to proceed with her toilette. But that was impossible for a few moments. In any sudden emotion, any great event, Emily had to speak to God, out of the fulness of her heart, ere she could enter into any other business.

Meantime Adeline and Pearl, though ostensibly preparing for dinner, were yet very much confused in their manner of doing it. Sad was their aspect, low their words to each other, though but on indifferent subjects.

Never before had any little Leslie been subjected to the ordeal of a lecture from mamma all alone. They felt for their Nessie, and trembled as they thought of the "rumbustical" state into which she would be thrown. For touch her on any sensitive point, and electricity ran through the house. They had visions of a stormy Nest rushing in, and upbraiding Adeline for telling, and Pearl for abetting, a most monstrous calumny.

No wonder Pearl put on her dress inside out, and Adeline brushed her shining curls into good order on one side and totally forgot to arrange the other.

But the door gently opens. A part of Nest appears on one side, but the other, her face, is still concealed.

"Nessie," says Pearl, springing to her, bringing her inside, and shutting to the door. Then with tender hand she tried to turn the averted face to her.

"Nessie," said Adeline on the other side, also trying to catch a glimpse.

At first they feared mamma had almost broken Nessie's spirit and heart at the same time. But all they could see of Nessie's face was a radiant flush of joy, and they were quite confounded.

"He loves her," exclaimed Adeline.

"Has he told you so, Nessie?" whispered Pearl.

No answer was required, for a well-known voice was heard, unwonted in that region of the house, but still not the less unmistakable because of the creaking shoes.

Papa stood there, a mixture of pleasure and perplexity in his face.

"Is my daughter Nest there?" he asks, putting on his spectacles.

"Yes, papa."

"There is a young man below who wishes to take her from me."

Nest, by common consent, was supposed to understand papa's ways better than any one else, so she was not a moment putting her arms round his neck, and hiding her face on his shoulder.

"So, so, that's it, is it? Well, well, I suppose he must have what he wishes. But do you know what love is, child?"

"Yes, papa—you love mamma."

"Ay, that's not badly put. God bless you, my dear! I have said yes, provided you say yes. I honour the young man; he has been frank and open with me—and if you love him, Nessie, you may be happy with him. But you are young, child."

"Not so young as mamma."

Just then mamma came, and then there ensued a wonderful quantity of kissing, crying, and congratulating, in the midst of which the dinner-bell rang.

"I suppose," said papa, "there will be

no objection to my asking a certain young man to dinner."

"Not at all, my dear John," said Emily, as usual seeing nothing of a furtive nature in John's words. "Of course, he ought to be asked; 'tis the proper thing to do."

That being settled, they all came down by degrees, and adjourned to the dining-room, where Anne was almost beside herself with wondering what event could have occurred to make Missus and Master late for dinner.

Furthermore, before it was over, the door bell rang violently, and, without any ceremony, in walked Lady Bernard and her two sons. Then began another scene of kissing and congratulating.

"I was obliged to come," whispered Lady Bernard to Emily, "and Frank and Walter would not be denied. We all feared you would overwhelm our poor Ralph with

scruples, but I see by his face you have been very good."

"Dear Lady Bernard, it is such a surprise—I hardly think it true now. I wish he may not have made a mistake."

"'You be whipped!' as Margaret Hill says. Why, my dear, good creature, if you had not been suffering your thoughts to stray away, making another match, you would have seen all this being hatched under your very eyes. I brought Ralph here on purpose; and he is a good, obedient boy, choosing the very one I wished. Do you not know, Emily, dear Emily Leslie, that you will find many more anxious to obtain one of your Nestlings for a wife?"

"Indeed, indeed you are mistaken—they are very nice, good girls."

"Tush, tush!—sing me no more that old song. Where are they all going? Oh! to see Wilsy. Then now let me take the

opportunity of telling you every particular about Ralph, whom I love as my own son."

Leaving Lady Bernard to explain many things to the simple couple that can be readily guessed by the reader, we will follow the little ones upstairs.

"Wilsy," began Walter Bernard, who was privileged to say and do whatever he pleased, "here is Sir Ralph Cuthbertson come to ask you for one of your young ladies, to take with him to Scotland as a wife."

"Well-a-day!" answered Wilsy, her Roman nose swelling high with pleasure, "Scotland is a long way off, but we have plenty from whom to pick and choose."

"Which do you recommend?" said Sir Ralph, sitting down and taking Joan on his knee. "This one with the brown velvet eyes?"

"Oh, no, sir, that's my own Miss Joan—

far too young for you. There's Miss Leslie, the sweetest young lady born—but then she is as good as bespoke; and Miss Nessie is just childish in her ways yet; but Miss Pearl, she is the very lady among them all."

Now, in more houses than one, from the kitchen upwards, it was well known among those lovers of gossip, the servants, that Mrs. Wilson, head nurse at the parsonage, was ready to stake her entire fortune upon the chance that Miss Pearl would live and die a real "lady"—that is, she was already a lady in every way but one, and in marrying she would become that one.

Probably, had Wilsy kept a betting-book, she might have been now called to account for such unequivocal pandering to her own side; but its effect was negative.

"I fear she would not have me. Ask her if she will," answered Sir Ralph.

laughed Pearl.

said Wilsy, in an

don't know what's

me," said Sir Ralph,

's hand, and kissing it.

exclaimed Wilsy, aghast

"you're confident."

—her father has given

her mistress, was for the

then triumphant, and

gratification in such high-

Walter Bernard declared

have missed the scene for

Nest. I never thought to

off; but hold up your

and tie your strings, and

a lady to match you."

for me, recollect, Wilsy,"

remarked Walter; "and, above all, never let any Scotch lairds come near her."

"Ho, begging your pardon, sir, we'll be expecting the pick of the land noo—"

"And wont look at younger sons, I suppose."

"Well, sir, I'll favour you so far. I never heerd any one denying you your wish, and I daur say I winna find it in my heart to cross you."

"Thank you, then. Good night, little wife—look as pretty on your wedding-day as you do now, and I'll swear to be very kind and not beat you."

Lady Bernard was in high delight, and before she left her husband appeared, when more congratulations ensued.

"Here," whispered he to Nessie, "I am so far more ready than my Lady—I have brought you a wedding-gift, and hope my good stars have led me to make you the first one."

Nessie was too much confused with the events of the evening to speak any thanks, and it was not until alone with Adeline and Pearl that she examined her gift.

No longer was the immortalized pin her only possession of jewellery. Lord Bernard's gift was a small brooch of an amethyst stone, set round with brilliant diamonds—of a value understood by neither of the three girls, though its sparkling beauty was fully appreciated.

All news flies fast—none so quickly as the rumour of a wedding.

Betty, quondam maid to the late Miss Charles, now cook at the parsonage, had a peculiar gift in the art of inhaling rumours.

So the delay in serving dinner, the strange young gentleman invited to share it, the sudden coming of Lady Bernard—all spoke volumes to her fertile imagination; and she was on the stairs, waiting

to shower over Mrs. Wilson congratulations, and pick up the real truth somehow, as the young ladies and Sir Ralph were all leaving the nursery.

"Ech, Mustress Wilson, but yer the lucky nurse. A real Barrow-night, and they tell me as Robarts's girl has gotten an offer frae one of the clarks, and Mustress Robarts is most mad abune it. And naebody is to ken a word on it. There's nae queston but this is a foine match, and we mun hae a gran wedding. It will hae to be sune, I'm thinking, by reason o' the mustress, and I wooder noo if he'll be openhonded. It's nane the fashion o' Scotch folk, ye ken; I kens them weel, cooming frae the borders."

Betty received an answer to all her questions to the full, so high with delight and conceit swelled the heart of "Mustress Wilson;" and moreover, as answer to the last, was shown a bank-note for five pounds,

put into Wilsy's hand secretly, as Sir Ralph left the room.

"My conscience! but that wor ceevil; he kens he has gotten a wife out o' a guid nest. But I mun away to wash up my dishes. I'll hae to spend a deal o' time thinking of the wedding-dinner, for he is the real quality. Ye ken, I'm parish born, and as there's nae telling their forbeers, its thatten way I be so knowledgeable o' quality ways, belike."

The news spread fast.

Bessie Trumps was told by the bride-elect herself — Jeffreys being out on his medical rounds. Bessie wept with joy while Nessie was there, and then wept in fear to think of the effect it might have on dear Jef, and how she should break the news to him.

Mrs. Dawson was unable to comfort her, feeling in her dear old-fashioned heart utterly ignorant of the necessity to condole with a

man, married, upon the intended wedding of one who would not marry him when she might have done so.

And she was justified in her thoughts. Long before they expected Jeffreys home a galloping horse denoted an arrival—two or three doors appeared to be split open in a wild search for them—a loud hurrah greeted his finding them! Bessie was snatched up, whirled round two or three times, in a manner neither decorous nor comfortable. Mrs. Dawson's cap was entirely displaced through his vehement kissing, and then he sat down, ran both hands two or three times through his hair, and exclaimed, "I knew she was born to be a lady. Now, what shall we give her? The earth, the sea, the air, must be ransacked to find her a suitable present."

Highly charmed at this satisfactory state of things, Bessie Trumps lent her best energies to decide this important matter.

Her quiet, good sense being very necessary; for Jeffreys' ideas roamed from a medicine-chest of his own peculiar fitting up to an Arabian horse—from an Isle of Skye terrier, which he had once heard Nest long for, to a pair of zebras, equally desired by that erratic young lady.

The Sabines were delighted.

"She is my god-daughter," said Mr. Sabine. "Once I gave her thirty pounds, but I do not think she was of an age to appreciate my gift. I shall give her another chance."

"An excellent idea, Sabine!" remarked his wife. "Thirty pounds will assist her father in buying the *trousseau*."

"Hah! a wonderful idea—women are indeed quick in twofold conceits. Dádivas quebrantan peñas. Lo mejor que puede hacer, es paga inmediate mente. Barba bien remogada, medio rapada."

"Regina, my child, some of these days

you will require thirty pounds for wedding garments."

Regina, with a sick chicken nursing in her pinafore, listened in attentive silence.

CHAPTER X.

" Heaven is the magazine wherein God puts
Both good and evil: prayers the key that shuts
And opens this great treasure; 'tis a key
Whose words are faith, and hope, and charity.
Would'st thou prevent a judgment due to sin,
Turn but the key, and thou may'st lock it in.
Or would'st thou have a blessing fall upon thee,
Open the door, and it will shower on thee."

NEARLES.

No one was more delighted than Lady Armitage; for a two-fold reason: she was gratified that one of her children, as she called them, should have engaged the affections of one so truly eligible in heart and disposition, so well-connected, and so wealthy. Secondly, she hoped that Adeline had so

much of the weakness of human nature in her, that, rather than Nest should marry before her, she would repent of her rash engagement to the young clergyman, and accept that other offer, the brilliancy of which would throw Nest's quite into the background.

Now, high as ran the hopes of Lady Armitage on this matter, it was one in which she would no more have acted, as she trusted Adeline would do, than she would have consented to live down a coal-mine.

Nevertheless she resented the sweetness, the unselfishness, the alacrity, with which that true daughter of her mother delighted in and assisted on Nessie's marriage.

She was disgusted—so disgusted indeed, she could not think of wounding her own feelings so much as to attend the wedding. If Adeline did not feel mortified at her younger sister marrying before her, Lady

Armitage experienced it doubly for her.

The wedding (as hinted through the medium of Betty, from whom it appeared impossible to hide the most distant coming event) must necessarily, for Emily's sake, be within three months, or put off for six.

There was not a dissentient voice in favour of the former, so the preparations began at once.

Extract from Journal.

"*Dec.* 25.—At this time, when Christians are called upon to renew their thanks to God—especially for the greatest of mercies, the redemption of mankind by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God—I feel bound to offer my particular thanks for the great blessing vouchsafed to me of good children. They are dutiful and obedient, modest and artless. My three eldest daughters owe much to the kindness and excellent training of their Aunt and Uncle Armitage, who have given them advantages

I could never have afforded, and I perceive that they are admired and sought after. My daughter Nest is about to make a great match; and if I had fears that the young man was somewhat captivated by her light heart and merry temper, further knowledge of him has led 'me to perceive that he has an excellent disposition—open, manly, and is of very gentlemanly manners. We have been gratified by his showing domestic tastes and a love of family pleasures. This augurs well for my daughter, who inherits a fondness for these customs. May God Almighty, for Christ's sake, shed blessings in abundance upon them, both temporal and spiritual, even as He hath blessed the marriage of her mother and me! May He enable my daughter to retain her simplicity of heart, and grant her sound sense and judgment, for her position will be new and trying! She is yet young to assume an important station in

the world, which her intended husband's connections, together with his splendid fortune, will so immediately bestow upon her.

"If it please God to accord me the gratification of a wish, I should not know what to desire, except the continuation of the blessings I now enjoy, through His bounty, and a more due appreciation of them.

"Thus, then, as has been my custom for thirty years, I rise in the middle of this night, and on my knees return thanks to Almighty God, for Christ my Saviour."

Now, the little sisters, Pearl at the head, were chagrined at the total absorption of Nest's thoughts and feelings in an individual whom she had known but two months, though he was her lover, and was soon to be her husband.

"Ambient, mellifluous is the air that encircles lovers," murmured Mr. Sabine; "they

are in good humour with mankind—they perceive life's evils, reposing on laps of roses—they meet rebuffs with smiling pity—they are armed, sheltered, impervious to the daily mischances common to all. They are gods to each other, and they feel god-like in their natures, looking down on the world below from their cloud-land of hope and enjoyment. I have experienced the state. Let my god-daughter inhale the essence of this time, to strengthen her for the plain realities of matrimony."

But he spoke as in an unknown tongue, to the uninitiated affectionate sisterhood.

To prove the present march of intellect, and the strides of fashion, it may be as well to describe the bride's dress.

A white merino sort of pelisse, richly embroidered in white silk, a white satin bonnet, heavily garnished with large bows and bunches of orange-flowers, thickly circled with silver leaves. A blonde veil

surmounted the whole structure, of which the pattern might be said, with due regard to truth, to have been copied from the peculiar formation of a cart-wheel.

The bridesmaids, four in number—Adeline Pearl, Maria Robarts, and Ellen Cuthbertson—were all in white silk, with scarfs to match, and bonnets made of the same.

Strange as to modern eyes such a costume might have appeared, they made a very pretty wedding group; and the sudden overwhelming burst of tears that the bride indulged in when the parting really came, though it marred her beauty, raised her up to her wonted position in the eyes of her sisters.

Light as was Nessie's heart, it was too natural and affectionate not to have a glimpse of the unknown future; and she was many miles on her journey before she gained courage to wipe them away again.

Sir Ralph could have no better proof that he was loved for himself only; for on the summit of as high a position as a girl could wish, he plainly saw she would have abandoned everything to remain with her family, at the last moment; and only love for him bore her through.

She was almost her merry-hearted self again when, on the second day, they changed horses at that identical inn from whence the ponderous old Bristol coach had conveyed her father and mother to Wales twenty years before.

Ralph had gone into the hotel to settle for the horses—and Nessie was beginning to examine her carriage, her own new beautiful carriage, and to wonder when she should cease to be afraid of her maid. It was a beautiful chariot, and Nessie was fully alive to the exhilarating delight of travelling with four horses.

She thought she must practise that graceful air of entire at-homishness that Aunt Armitage always bore when leaning back in her carriage—and was about to put it in practice, when she started at being accosted.

Three begrimed but friendly faces were at the carriage windows.

"Begs parding, my lady—we moikes as bould as to wish ye joy. We ha' knowed your pa and ma, my lady, ever since as theoy tuck their forst jorney into Wailes, my lady—and we has been allais moightily pleased to see the fomily. We red o' the foine wedding, and we ha' been a hoiping loike as yer leddyship would mak it convenient to coom this woiy, when yer leddyship gangs to toike persession of yer leddyship's grand estaites. Hoipes no offince, my leddy."

This was said in sentences from one mouth to the other—and Nessie's tender

heart warmed to this mention of the dear father and mother.

"Oh! Ralph," she whispered, as he returned, her eyes full of tears, "think of these good people knowing papa and mamma so many years—and wishing us joy! Will you thank them—I cannot."

So Ralph did it in the happiest manner —and as the magic words "all right!" were said, he tossed them a sovereign, with a *nonchalant* air, that was a contrast to the slow careful manner in which John had been wont to extract his shilling out of his little leathern purse, for the same purpose.

"She hae joost her moother's smoile over agin—and there's another yong man as hae gotten a sunbeam to be his broide loike, and moighty pleased he be to hae gotten her."

With this and sundry other compliments sent after her, Nessie was whirled out of sight—and went with cheerful heart, and

no forebodings to make a new home for herself, in a country she had never seen, among people whose names she had only lately heard—and, what was the greatest trial of all, 500 miles away from all those who had hitherto possessed her affections. Such is the power of love.

With her history we have little more to do than as regards her coming again at times into coalition with her father and mother, the only hero and heroine of this book.

Extract from Journal.

"*Feb.* 18*th.*—Mr. Robarts did me the honour to-day of asking the hand of my daughter, Pearl, for his eldest son, Gustavus Robarts. I explained to him that I was a poor man, and had saved nothing for my children; on the contrary, I had encroached upon my capital, my family being large, and the expenses of so populous a parish onerous.

"He frankly and kindly said he desired no dowry with my daughter. He intended to settle Ty-mawr upon his son, and bestowing upon him a fourth share of the works; besides an allowance of one thousand a-year, he would enjoy a very good income, and our child would live near us. Furthermore, he complimented my dear wife and me, through her, saying he was always desirous of calling one of our girls daughter, and that his son might consider himself extremely fortunate if he gained Pearl for his wife; and in good truth I think so myself, though I said it not aloud. I have always admired in her a certain graceful self-possession, joined to much modesty, yet spirit. Also, she is talented, and has succeeded in all she undertakes to accomplish. My pretty Pearl! it seems to me at this moment that I was scarce as beholden to Mr. Robarts for his liberal conduct and his polite speeches as I ought to have been. There is a sun-

shine about the child that I shall not like to lose out of my house; but he must be answered.

"'Their mother and I,' thus did I reply, 'have great confidence in our children. In such an important matter, young as my daughter is, she must have free judgment. I will send for her.'

"He was pleased to pursue his kind remarks; and I listened, well content, until the child appeared.

"To my mind I have never seen my P. P. look prettier. She had run in haste, and her colour resembled the bright bloom that in days gone by meandered so freely on her mother's cheek.

"She listened in a pretty deferential way to Mr. Robarts, as he made her the offer in his son's name, and I was surprised to see no bashfulness or confusion in her face. It seemeth that P. P. has already a mature judgment.

"'Sir,' she answered, modestly, 'I thank you very much, but Gustavus should have told you he has said all this before to me, and that I answered him, more than once, I could not be his wife.'

"'Wherefore so?' said Mr. Robarts, abruptly, and, as I thought, somewhat rudely.

"'Because, sir, I do not respect Gustavus as a friend; so I certainly cannot love him as a husband.'

"'He is wild, I allow; but both his mother and I think that with one of your father's daughters to guide him, he will not fail to do rightly, and become a good man.'

"'Sir, I am very faulty myself—I would wish to look up to my husband, and not to have one to lean on me.'

"'Try him, Pearl; give him a chance, my dear.'

"And Mr. Robarts spoke anxiously—so

did my heart beat. Methought, 'This father and mother think I may spare one of my white lambs to save their erring sheep. And if the child, overgifted with her mother's kindliness, should be smitten with pitifulness, I may not say nay to so charitable a work.' But no.

"With clear eyes, and no faltering, without any other emotion than a deepened colour, and a little dignity that well became her, little Pearl put both her hands into Mr. Robarts's and said—

"'Forgive me, sir, but I have still less regard for Gustavus than before, since he has subjected you to hear what he knows so well himself, that I would be any poor honest man's wife rather than his. Is he kind to you, sir, or is his conduct gentlemanly towards me?'

"'Come, come, no more,' exclaimed Mr. Robarts, throwing off her little hands, 'you look higher, that we all know.

You need cast no slur on my son, but be honest and say that you have other game in your eye.'

"Astonished, Pearl looked unabashed into his face, which coloured as he met the look. She then curtseyed and withdrew.

We were silent for a moment. Robarts then rose and said hastily:—

"'Well, Leslie, if she won't have him, she won't. She is a pretty girl, and my wife had set her heart on the match; and let me tell you, Miss Pearl may never have a better offer. Perhaps she may find that out some of these days. I should have been glad to have connected myself with so worthy a family—for, as my wife says, you lack money, and we have enough; we want method, and you overflow in that respect. If your son had lived now, I should have been heartily glad to give him one of my girls. Good morning; we keep this affair secret, you know. Gus is not to be blown upon."

"I was glad when he left. I liked not his attempt to bully the child—and he was coarse in his remarks. I felt anger rising, and then—my son. Riches are dearly purchased if in gaining them we lose the nice perceptions of sympathy and charity. My son—yes, I have a son, but he is an angel of God. They do not marry, nor are given in marriage, where he dwells. If I lament him still, O my God, pardon me—the remembrance of his character, his talents, his many perfections, rise before me with undiminished freshness. And yet, as years went on, some flaw might have marred the beauty of the whole. Let me thank Thee, my God, for innumerable mercies—for the happy letters from our absent child—for the health and good spirits of my dear wife — God grant her a happy hour——

"My P. P. has just been in, to beg

I will say nothing to her mamma of what has just passed.

"'I think with you, my dear,' I said—'these are events of which it is bad taste to boast.'

"'Oh,' answered P. P. in her pretty arch way, 'I feel no inclination to boast—rather the contrary, I fear; but mamma will tease herself perhaps, and think that Gustavus may be unhappy, and Mrs. Robarts; and she will wish—wish all sorts of things that you know can never be, papa.'

"So she smiled and passed out of the room, leaving in my heart a glow of sunshine that made me mindful to thank God for the gift of so blest a child."

"*Feb.* 20*th.*—Yesterday Ty-mawr was deserted—the whole family left suddenly, without bidding any adieux, for their house in Cheltenham. 'Tis well for us—not so well for them. They lack high-mindedness, methinks."

"*Feb.* 22*nd.*—Sabine tells me that in his opinion no Christian ever described heaven in more glowing colours than the heathen Socrates. As he rolled out the sentence in his sonorous Latin, I could not but agree with him; and translated, the passage strikes me with equal force.

"'I am in good hope that there is something for the dead; and as the old saying is, it will be much better for the good than the bad.'—*Phædo*, 143.

"'The body in a prepared state, like the Egyptian mummy, lasts for an incredible time. The soul departs to some other place invisible like itself, where dwells the good and wise God. There they enjoy sunlight equally by day and night—lead a life without toil—not ploughing the earth with labour, or the waters of the sea for a scanty maintenance. But amongst the chief gods, those men who have delighted in faithfully keeping their oaths pass their time

without sorrow. The others bear pain that cannot be looked upon.

"'But if any have endured thrice through both states, on the earth and under the earth, to preserve their souls entirely from unrighteousness, they accomplish the divine road to the tower of Saturn, where breezes from the ocean blow round the island of the blest. Flowers of gold shine there—some from the earth, some from trees, some from water plants, as bracelets for their arms and chaplets for their heads, according to the righteous decrees of Rhadamanthus.' *Olymp.*, 2.

"Socrates may have borrowed from Pindar and Pythagoras, and others; but excelling them all in his idea of the one, holy, living God, he may have caught some tradition from the Jewish patriarchs. See the 'Timæus.' Cicero burst out after this manner:—

"'Oh, illustrious day, when I may repair to that divine council and assembly of souls,

leaving this filthy turmoil below. If I err in thinking the souls of men immortal, it is a voluntary error, and one which so delights me that while I live it shall not be extorted from me.' He had just quoted the words of Cyrus on his death-bed, on the same subject, which are these——"

Mr. Leslie had written thus far, when he was interrupted by a knock at the door. It was late in the night, or rather very early in the morning; it was his habit to employ himself in some well-beloved study, during certain hours, when his Emily was enduring her woman's curse. Heretofore Wilson, after her accustomed fashion, had burst in, unannounced, with her news.

In sudden fear, he arose and opened the door. A little white-robed figure was there, with startled eyes, and cheeks pale as her dressing gown.

"My P. P.!—your mother!"

"She is well, papa—Wilsy sent me to

tell you; she is wonderfully well—and oh! so happy—"

"Thank God!—and the child—"

"Yes, papa," and the colour rushed to Pearl's face.

"What is ill, my P. P., you look troubled."

"No, papa."

"Anything wrong with this little baby?—your mother hath been overtaxed, I fear. Is it to be baptised?"

"No, papa, but Wilsy wished me to tell you, dear papa, we have not a little sister this time—"

"A boy—a son—my son!" Mr. Leslie covered his face with his hands, and sank on a chair.

At that moment a chorus of little voices was heard, and running down the stairs came the whole troop of children, robed in anything Wilsy could snatch up—and, flocking into the study, crowded round their

papa. "A brother, papa, two little brothers—two dear little darling brothers—Wilsy sent us to help Pearl to tell you!"

It was impossible to resist this burst of joy. "Two, Pearl?" he asked, looking up, flushed with emotion.

"Yes, papa, two beautiful healthy boys—mamma is so anxious to show them to you."

"Two little brothers—two little twin brothers!" and the chorus rose loud and hilarious.

"Hush, hush!—no noise—be good and quiet, and I will take you all to see them."

"I will follow, my child, shortly," said her father; and Pearl, carrying off the delighted sisterhood, left her father to speak with his God.

Truly they were beautiful boys, even at that early age. And the news of their birth created a universal delight through the whole valley, extending joyfully up to Adeline in London, and from thence down to Nest in Scotland.

It might have been supposed a boy had never been born there before. People flocked to see them as if they were a show, and showered so many good wishes and blessings over them that they might well be said to thrive more than any other children ever did, in consequence. The farmers' wives brought them presents of eggs and poultry, none of which they could eat at present; but it appeared these gifts were more the excuse to bring them into the presence of these "gifts of God," as Margaret Hill styled them.

The miners brought up curious ores from the bowels of the earth, and persisted in laying them with their own hands in the sight of these precious babes—perhaps for the same reason as the farmers' wives.

People made excuse to call: it was a privilege to nurse one; and especially favoured did those think themselves who were permitted to see them sleeping in their double cradle—a gift from an old

carpenter, who, out of love for Mrs. Leslie, carved and fashioned this curious piece of workmanship for the use of her twin boys.

Mrs. Leslie was the only one who regarded them merely as boys. Nay, she rather resented, if she could resent anything, Wilsy's entire abandonment of the girls to the under-nurse, on the plea that no other hand than her own could attend to these unexpected, unlooked-for prizes in her nursery.

John accepted these "gifts from God" with a humility and gratitude indescribable, and only known to the Searcher of all hearts. Like His righteous servant, Job, God had sifted him, and, touching him through the tender flesh of his heart, had wounded him with a sore boil, that made itself felt in every joy of life; but his penitence, his prayers, his faith and trust, had availed him much. Like righteous

Job, he was pardoned, and his "end was to be more blessed than the beginning."

Receiving his sons in such a spirit, no wonder that Mr. Leslie was often found creeping up to the nursery, as he thought inaudible (he is ignorant to this day that his shoes creak), and was to be found reading by the side of the double cradle. He was even known to carry them about one on each arm—a favour accorded to none of the little girls, except at the solitary instance of their baptism. And he must have carried them comfortably, for the little fellows began to know the sound of the creaking shoes, and were joyfully holding out their arms in anticipation of a jaunt with papa.

Very happy was this summer — the Armitages and Adeline from London, Gwenny from school, the Cuthbertsons from Scotland—all came flocking to the Valley of a Hundred Fires, on purpose to pay a

visit to the boys. How they were admired, and how merry everyone was, and how pleased to see the happiness of Nessie, who was growing out of her school-girl shyness, and becoming a most high-bred, stately lady, only running up and down the Cinder Tip covertly—that feat was a sacred duty.

Meantime, no one heard of or from the Robartses. Gentle Mrs. Leslie wrote letter after letter, one kinder than other; but of course Mrs. Robarts considered them all as so many insults: she did not guess that Pearl and her papa had taken such effectual care to prevent "Gus" being "blown upon."

CHAPTER XI.

"The moments past, if thou art wise, retrieve,
With pleasant memory of the bliss they gave;
The present hours in present mirth employ,
And bribe the future with the hopes of joy."

PRIOR.

"ADELINE," said Lady Bernard to her one day when they were alone, "I wish you would discover for me why my little Pearl shuns Frank. He has mine and his father's permission to court her for his wife; and he has been doing so most assiduously ever since Nessie's marriage, yet never can he get one single word with her alone. I feel assured that she

knows he loves her, as her colour changes if he is named, or enters the room, but she has evaded every effort to hear the avowal of his affection. He will not permit me to speak, and he won't write. He says he understands her—that she knows her worth, and will not be won unsought."

"I think Frank is right in his opinion," answered Adeline. "Nevertheless, Pearl has so sensitive a nature, it is probable she may carry this feeling too far. Lord Bernard must speak to papa."

"Not so, Adeline—Frank will not hear of it; besides, I do not think we any of us wish to let your parents into the secret, until Pearl herself decides his fate: they appear wholly ignorant of it at present."

"Quite so; and perhaps that induces Pearl to be still more guarded. Neither she, nor my parents, could expect you would be content with her as a wife for your eldest son."

"Adeline, I am ashamed of you. When saw you me worldly and mammon-stricken? Hearken, my dear—ever since Pearl's birth I have prayed she might be the wife of one of my sons, and rather that of the eldest than the youngest. Her character has always been a delight to me to watch. There is a gentleness, yet a spirit in it, that so blend together, one would lose half its beauty without the other."

"My Lady!"—burst in Lord Bernard at this juncture, hot and breathless—"'tis done! I could wait no longer. Frank's scruples, and your feminine nonsense, were overmatching the little patience I enjoy by nature, until even that was smothered. I met Pearl not long ago, coming up for Adeline—of course guarded as usual by Gwladys and Gwenny. I skilfully dispatched them on an important message to their papa, promising to take vast care of Pearl in their absence. This I have truly

done. I have shut her up in the summer-house with Frank to keep her company; and by the eagerness in his face, and her blushing entreaties to me to remain—(but I ran for my life)—I have no doubt 'tis all over by this time."

"Indeed, you have proved yourself quite a diplomatist—only boast no further until we are certain."

They were not kept long in suspense. Frank took instant advantage of his opportunity—only assured himself that her shy and reluctant demeanour proceeded more from love than indifference; and then, remembering the anxiety of his father and mother, gave P. P. such a moving description of their sufferings, that she was as eager as himself to ease their hearts.

"My dear Pearl," said her intended father-in-law, after they had in some measure recovered from their ecstasies, "I thank you from my heart. Kate and I always

longed for a daughter, and always broke the Tenth Commandment when we saw you. Now you have removed this sin from us—you are ours."

Now, this coming event had been seen and known by every person far and near, save Mr. and Mrs. Leslie. It had always been decided that Miss Pearl Leslie had been born and created for no other purpose than to be the future Lady Bernard. She was very unlike all the rest of the sisterhood. She was fairer, more gentle, more wise; she had never been suffered to "rough it," as they had done. She was more educated, more talented; in short, she was a pearl, and deserved the rarest setting. What a tumultuous party wended their way down to the parsonage to tell the joyful news! What astonishment and wonder was created in the opening minds of those sagacious damsels, Gwladys and Gwenny, as they met the party, and joined

the triumphant procession; and how, when duly initiated, they delighted in mamma's bewilderment, and papa's slow, but undoubted happiness; and how the others confided to each other, in mutual confidence, the expectations they had formed, and the impatience with which they had waited, and the unkindness of Pearl in keeping them all in such heartless suspense.

Again did Lady Armitage rejoice in a twofold manner. Surely it was impossible that the most amiable nature could forbear repining over the untowardness of fate that poured upon two younger sisters such an uninterrupted flow of happiness in their love affairs—while she, the eldest, was losing her youth and bloom from entire perverseness. But it was possible. There was no shadow on Adeline's face; there was no vexation apparent in her words or voice. She appeared as happy in the now-assured prospects of the over-

sensitive Pearl as any one of the family, and indeed more so. Perhaps she had been in Pearl's confidence. Into that, however, no one had any right to search.

Lady Armitage considered it necessary to put Adeline through a severe course of aggravating remarks, by way of bringing her to a sense of her inconvenient amiability. Also, she heaped upon Pearl an overwhelming amount of tenderness and good wishes, generally sprinkling them most thickly when Adeline was by. Praise from Aunt Armitage was so rare, so prized, that Adeline's face beamed with delight for Pearl's sake; like her mother, she never gave people credit for two motives in anything they did or said. Very angry grew Lady Armitage. How she wished Adeline was of an envious, disagreeable, wicked temper; and how, as she wished, Adeline became more gentle, amiable, attentive. She was very nearly giving in—fairly conquered by a sweetness

of temper that was proving itself so incomparable. She would make one more effort.

"I should be glad, my darling Pearl, if you would accede to Lady Bernard's request, and be married in London. It would delight me to have the wedding from our house.

"Thank you, aunt—it shall be where you and my father and mother wish."

"Very well, my dear child; you please me—you take no delight in thwarting the wishes of those who love you dearly. Adeline, sit down immediately and write to Hopper. Desire him to send to the different tradespeople—I must have the house in rarest order. In fact, tell him the wedding will take place from there, and that I shall wish everything conducted in the same order and way as if it had been your marriage we were celebrating."

Adeline rose with alacrity—a smile beaming over her face.

"And the day," continued Lady Armitage, angrily noticing this — "what day, child, have you and Frank fixed upon?"

"The same day on which Adeline is married," answered Pearl. She had a low, soft voice—but it was clear, and the words fell distinctly upon every ear.

Lady Armitage, herself astonished, was yet capable of seeing that Pearl's unexpected answer made a prodigious sensation upon the others. Evidently the idea was as new to them as to her.

Mrs. Leslie, still incapable of gainsaying her sister in anything, flushed high in nervous trepidation. The pen fell from Adeline's hand, and her colour rivalled her mother's; while the tears collected slowly in her eyes, and in the bewildered pause that ensued were heard to drop audibly upon the paper on which she was writing. Pearl rose up, went to Adeline and kissed her, then turning to her aunt she erected

her little head after the disdainful fashion peculiar to her—

"I do not intend to marry until Adeline does."

Defiant was the look Lady Armitage bestowed upon her—dauntless the other that Pearl sent back, enforced with a brilliant sparkle from her blue eyes, and a radiant bloom denoting stern determination.

Lady Armitage looked again. The bloom and the sparkle waxed brighter. Adeline laid an imploring hand on the little defiant thing. Mamma rose up, red and fluttered.

Lady Armitage looked once more. Adeline's hand was thrust down.

"You will allow Uncle Armitage"—began Pearl——

"Yes, my dear—Edward, be kind enough to write to Mr. Badinel, and tell him (if he has no objection) to come here, to be introduced to my brother and sister."

Whenever Aunt Armitage did a deed,

she always executed it better than any one else; and in the happy joy that ensued, was likely to feel well rewarded for her unexpected capitulation. But the surprise proved a little too much for Adeline. Some natures bear adversity better than prosperity; or, probably, she was herself unaware of the real strength of her feelings, which is often the case with unselfish people. Her joy made her very ill; and in the remorse that smote Lady Armitage, she discovered how very nearly Adeline would have wrecked her happiness for life, in striving to fulfil the wishes, whims or not, of the mother-aunt she loved better than herself.

There was now nothing that she did not do to make amends; and before Mr. Badinell made his appearance at the parsonage, which he did at the earliest possible moment, so delightedly happy (Lady Armitage could not take her eyes from his face), Adeline was

so far recovered as to be able to come down-stairs for a few hours every day.

"What a heroine was Pearl! She had conquered Aunt Armitage, a feat no other living being could boast of performing."

Thus said Emily to John, when, *tête-à-tête*, they were pouring out their happiness to each other:—

"I take myself much to task," said John, "that I suffered myself to be deceived by Adeline's invariable good-humour and apparent content. We have allowed other things to occupy us, Emily, and forgotten her patience and fortitude. The child Pearl, amid all her happiness, has been more thoughtful than ourselves."

"I think not, John; it was more from peculiar circumstances that my sister gave way. But now, let us think of no further disagreeables. My happiness is so great at dear Adeline's prospects, I can think of nothing else. And is he not a charming

young man, suited to her in every way?"

"Truly he is so. I know not what good there is in me, that my God should thus overwhelm me with such extraordinary blessings—"

"Oh, John!—"

"Yes, Emily, for my three eldest daughters married so excellently to husbands requiring no portions during my life-time, relieves me of pecuniary pressure. I must now save something towards the education of our boys—"

"Dear little fellows! it will be some years yet ere they will be any expense to you, John. Really, when I consider everything, I feel myself not only the happiest woman in the world, but as if nothing could ever make me unhappy again."

CHAPTER XII.

"Oh! my friend,
That thy faith were as mine! that thou could'st see
Death still producing life, and evil still
Working its own destruction; could'st behold
The strife and troubles of this troubled world
With the strong eye that sees the promised day
Dawn through this night of tempest! All things, then,
Would minister to joy; then should thine heart
Be healed and harmonized, and thou would'st feel
God always, everywhere—and all in all."

SOUTHEY.

Now who would believe, after this speech, that Mrs. Leslie was discovered only the next morning weeping over a letter she had just received by the post.

It was from Mrs. Robarts, and contained but a very few words :—

"Come to me, my friend—the only one to whom I can turn in the heaviest affliction that ever a poor mother was doomed to undergo. Come to me—I shall know neither hope nor comfort until I see your dear, kind face. "Yours,

"JANE ROBARTS."

Though Emily wept over this letter, no one else appeared inclined to do so. On the contrary, the family rose up in rebellion. (Mrs. Leslie was already packing up). She—the mother, the life, the sunbeam, the very focus of all the sparkling rays of joy that cast now such a halo round the parsonage—to leave them in the first beginning of a happiness that was as yet scarcely realized, was not to be endured. And for a person who had now, for nearly a year, ignored her existence, and scorned her friendship, was still more distasteful. Also the letter was irritating of itself. It gave no reason why her pre-

sence was so peremptorily desired. They all knew that Mrs. Robarts had whims and crotchets sufficient to wear out nerves of the strongest texture. Probably she was now in a state of whims, and scrupled not to sacrifice Mrs. Leslie's present happiness to have them fulfilled.

Even the good John murmured rather loudly against this inroad, countermining his domestic happiness; but Emily knew how to silence him.

"I daresay," she half whispered, "it is about their son Gustavus, you know; he is so very naughty. Gustavus, perhaps, is dead."

"I will go, Emily," answered John, "and secure your place by the coach."

So Mrs. Leslie departed, and about eight o'clock the evening after receiving the letter arrived at Lansdowne Crescent, Cheltenham.

What amount of indignation would have

been poured out upon the unfortunate Mrs. Robarts had it been known in the parsonage wherefore she refrained from telling Mrs. Leslie the reason her presence was desired; nor did they know for long. Emily had an intuition they would be angry, and so refrained from increasing the evil odour surrounding her friend's name.

Four of the little Robarts were dangerously ill of scarlet fever; and, judging of Emily by herself, Mrs. Robarts would not inform her of the fact until she was fairly in contact with the sick children.

For a moment, being human after all, Emily felt a throb of indignation. For the sake of her own precious flock she must now isolate herself from the home she loved so much, ruled so well, and of which she was eminently conscious she was the ruling pivot upon which all joy, all comfort turned — and for an indefinite period.

But being also angelic, the throb of indignation vanished at the first wailing cry that smote upon her ear. She threw off her cloak and bonnet with alacrity—was administering to their comfort in less than five minutes.

Being difficult to manage in health, the Robarts's children were wholly mutinous when ill; and it was in consequence of her own inability to enforce the doctor's orders, that were vitally important for the children's safety, that Mrs. Robarts had sent for Emily. But even her gentle influence was in a measure unavailable.

Four little coffins left the house within a period of ten days. The grief of the distracted mother poured itself out in angry reproaches to all around her.

"Nay," said the doctor, shocked and irritated by her violence and want of submission, "impute not to us the failure of our remedies, but the rather that God—

sees it necessary to punish you for want of faith. Rise up, and thank Him that two of your children out of the six smitten are saved—saved by the unremitting care and nursing of your friend, Mrs. Leslie. Rise up, and pray to God that the others yet in danger of infection may be spared. You have no time left for reproaches—you require it all for prayer."

But his words seemed as mockery to her, and shortly her own became ravings; for she sickened with the fever on the same day that Maria and Elizabeth came downstairs convalescent. The three eldest sons were not at home, and Mr. Robarts had moved into an opposite house, from whence he could hear hourly news of his family, yet ran no danger of infection.

Mrs. Leslie, though inclined at first to cavil at this arrangement, considered it but prudent, when she saw how large and corpulent he had grown, and that there could

be little hope of his surviving did he take the fever. In her eyes the father of a family was sacred, and she regarded his withdrawal from danger as no more than proper prudence. But again she had reason to be angry, when she perceived he was no more troubled about his wife than he had been with regard to the children.

"I made up my mind she would have it," remarked he, the morning after her seizure.

He came every time that he wished for news to a small window to make his inquiries of Mrs. Leslie.

"I fear, from the doctor's grave looks, that she will have it severely," remarked Emily.

"Ah, no doubt; and she has no stamina, nothing to fight against the fever; she wore herself out long ago, as I daresay you know, Mrs Leslie."

Emily shut down the window in indig-

nation. For four days and nights Mrs. Robarts raved in unconscious delirium. On the fourth evening she suddenly recovered her senses, and asked to see her children.

Emily, wiping away tears of joy at this delightful change, sent hastily for the doctor ere she obeyed her wishes.

There was no satisfaction such as Emily expected in his face, after examining her, and feeling her pulse.

"Yes, she may see them all, and her husband also."

"You fear," whispered Emily — then paused, unable to go on.

"I fear nothing, because I know she must die before morning. Break it to her if you think fit; but I scarcely advise it, she is so nervous—her death-bed will be terrible if she knows it is near. On the contrary, please her, comfort her, amuse her, and give way to her least wish, and she

will probably fall gently asleep. Out of that sleep she will never awake."

Emily's tender heart and religious principles had a severe struggle, and, unable to settle the question herself, she sent for a clergyman. He knew his duty, but it may be questioned if he would have fulfilled it, had he known that the effect would have been so contrary to his hopes.

At first Mrs. Robarts would not believe in her danger. She then exhausted the little remaining strength she had in vain cries for help. As she became aware of the rapid failing of her powers she frantically insisted upon having all her children then in the house brought and put upon her bed, in her sight.

"I cannot die—why did God give me these children, and then take me from them? Who is there to love and care for them?"

"Their father," answered the clergyman,

merely hoping to distract her mind from worldly affairs.

"Their father will not rise up night after night and go and look after them. Their father—I say nothing against Jaspar, he has been kind to me—perhaps kinder than I deserve—but I cannot leave my children—God is too just to take me from them."

"He will be their Heavenly Father."

"Torment me not—you have no children, otherwise you would know that the mother—the mother is everything to them."

"Oh, Mrs. Robarts, dear, dearest friend, have faith in God. You must leave your children in His holy keeping. And where could they have a surer haven?" whispered Emily, in despair.

"And you say this—you a mother?"

"Yes, I a mother. If I was now as you are, I should mourn for my dear husband bereft of me, when he would require love and companionship in the down-

ward hill of life; but my children I would give up into the hands of their Almighty Father, secure that in His justice He would give them the same chance of weal and woe, here and hereafter, as the rest of the world. Trust in God."

"But your children are different from mine. I have guarded them so carefully from every trouble. They know nothing —they can do nothing without me. Save me, doctor; try some other remedy—try anything—I will endure torture, if you will save my life."

Thus did she implore, beseech, and command, until her hoarse whispers could scarcely be understood. The clergyman prayed aloud; at every pause Emily sobbed between her fervent Amens, the children, awe-stricken and horrified, turned their eyes from one to the other, as if appealing to be removed from so painful a sight.

Their mother vainly tried to raise her

feeble form, and stretched out her weak hands as in a piteous appeal that they would shelter in her embrace. But they shrunk from her touch, and with one last long wailing cry she lay back, still conscious for a few moments, a few precious moments, that enabled her to see Emily throw her kind arms round the children, to hear words that promised a motherly care over them. Then the eyes grew dim, the ears closed upon earthly sounds, and ere the last child had been removed from the bed the spirit was gone. It appeared, notwithstanding that the poor dead mother had in some measure lost her life through over-care and anxiety for those immediately belonging to her, none mourned her so sincerely as one who had little reason to do so, Mrs. Leslie.

Mr. Robarts, having declared he expected the issue all along, did not consider it necessary to express his grief. He ap-

peared so satisfied at being proved a correct prophet, that his complacency salved over the sorrow. Maria was still so weak after her attack, that she was indifferent upon any matter, and the others were all at a most unthinking age. Therefore, having paid the last duties to her friend, advised, and seen her advice carried out, that the whole family should remove to the sea-side, but the two now stricken with the fever, who could be safely left to the discreet care of the nurse and doctor, Emily prepared herself to join again her happy household.

She must undergo a certain quarantine first, which she considered it best to do in the neighbourhood of London. Three weeks, sad and never to be forgotten, she had passed at Cheltenham. In three weeks more the two weddings were to take place, from the house of Sir Edward Armitage, May Fair. Thus the two families would be

coming to town soon, and she might hold some communication with them, through windows, or in the open air.

Shocked and dismayed were they all to see (all but John, who had insisted upon coming to Emily at once, infected or no, and never noticed the change until they pointed it out), mamma had cut off all her hair, and was wearing a close mob-cap.

"Infection lingers longer in hair than anything, my dears," apologized Emily.

"But you have positively had your head shaved, Emily."

"Of course, sister—and very comfortable it is to have no hair."

"But the figure you look, Emily."

"Not at all, sister—no one will notice any difference—John did not."

"Yes, I did—I perceived that my wife was more pretty to me than ever, her countenance more sweet; she has been doing angel's work, and the halo of it

shines to me out of the frills of her little mob-cap."

After that no one made another complaint, and the preparations for the double wedding progressed without hindrance.

Though everyone was delighted about Pearl, almost all the sympathies of the family rallied round Adeline.

Adeline received eighty-four presents. Adeline's intended husband was much petted by the whole family. Even Lady Bernard made a fuss about him, and did not look at Frank if he was by.

Also Pearl was deposed from her pedestal in the favour of Aunt Armitage, and Adeline reinstated up a dozen steps higher.

Therefore it may be supposed that Adeline was in a peculiar state. She was very happy, but there was pain mixed with her happiness. How was she to express her gratitude for so much undeserved kindness? Before she could make up her mind how to

do it, the wedding-day approached, was near, came, and passed.

As we have described Nessie's wedding dress (that poor disappointed young creature could not attend the wedding, owing to a private business of her own at home), we ought to give the others, by way of marking how the world progressed.

Nest's *trousseau* had cost eighty pounds; and consisted, besides her wedding dress, of one for a ball, two for dinners, two for the morning, one for evening at home, and a silk pelisse.

Adeline, whose *trousseau* was furnished by her aunt and uncle, had about fourteen dresses altogether, besides having a harp, piano, and carriage, all included as gifts in the *trousseau*. Therefore hers mounted up to nearly five hundred pounds.

Pearl's, without the harp, piano, or carriage, cost about one hundred pounds; but then Lord Bernard gave more than that

for costly gifts of jewellery, and Lady Bernard presented her with her wedding dress and veil.

The brides were dressed alike in white satin, with white chip bonnets, and long ostrich feathers, with valuable veils of Brussels lace.

They both behaved remarkably well; and Gwenny besought Gwladys not to forget the manner, as it was precisely the same demeanour that they two must adopt when a similar event occurred to them.

At the breakfast, Lord Bernard, sitting on the left hand of his new daughter, begged her to show herself his true child, and present to the father and mother who had reared her to be his pride and darling, two little packets before she drove away.

Pearl was one of those inestimable people to whom, if a hint was but given, they divined and executed that hint better than was conceived even by the originator. So

pretty was the manner, so true the words, so delicate the compliment paid, that those two literal people, John and Emily, upon opening their packets, and discovering in both five new bank of England notes for one hundred pounds each, took them at once as Pearl's present, and no more considered it incumbent on them to rebuke the giver by returning them, or try to discover who had put such an affront upon them, than they would have refused to do a kindness to any one.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Hark! how chimes the passing bell!
There's no music to a knell;
All the other sounds we hear
Flatter, and but cheat the ear.
This doth put us still in mind
That our flesh must be resigned,
And a general silence made—
The world is muffled in a shade."

JAMES SHIRLEY.

Extracts from Journal.

"*Dec. 25th*, 182—. —I rose in the night, and, according to custom, heartily thanked God on my knees, first for the gift of His Son, my Saviour, who died to save me. I had to record many other mercies. The

recovery of my dear and matchless wife from a dangerous feverish attack, which it appears to me has lain dormant in her constitution since her charitable visit to Cheltenham. She has a good spirit, and so long as there was work to do, threw off the first symptoms. Also a pressure in my pecuniary affairs, which touched me the more heavily because of my little boys, has been removed. The times increase in luxuries and expenses, and if I have not been able to save during the past years, I feel assured I cannot do so for the future.

"My children will have to recollect that, if I leave them but little money at my death, at least I gave them the best education I could procure; and that in everything they have shared our pleasures, amusements, and journeys.

"Their mother has shed a sunshine over all, which will, no doubt, leave a due impression upon their minds. How much do

I not owe her? She has transmitted to her children her sweet temper, her talents, industry, good health, and strong constitution, together with the blessings of piety and good principles. To these we owe it, that our daughters have been established in life, not only earlier than we might expect, but to our entire satisfaction as regards the characters of their husbands. And in point of fortune and estate much beyond our expectations. Also they may, without vanity, be pleased that they have been chosen, for their own intrinsic merit, by gentlemen of character, talented and resolute, both thoughtful and considerate, who, in marrying, sought for happiness to give and receive—the truest maxim on which to begin wedded life.

"Bad and troublesome times may come, and there is a fear lowering over us. But we trust that the many bounties we have

received at the hand of God will endue us with the more willing submission.

"Mary Hindmarsh died on the 16th of this month of cholera. At least so it is supposed, but no other case having occurred as yet, we trust this awful visitation has been spared us. For this I pray God, through Jesus Christ my Saviour. Amen."

"*Dec.* 30.—The ink was barely dry, after these words, written on Christmas morning, when I was summoned to attend the dying moments of Elizabeth Hales, also smitten with cholera. As the day drew on, I was called out of church—the disease had broken out with a virulence that will long be remembered. More than fifty deaths have occurred during the last forty-eight hours, in all parts of the town. Two-thirds of the victims are women of middle age, bad habits, and weak constitutions. Contagion or infection has been traced in nearly all

the cases, but there are apparently predisposing causes. But what is the nature of the disease, and how it makes its capricious progress, these are mysteries; nor have any remedies been found. Stimulants appear now to be condemned; and Dr. Dawson endeavours, he tells me, to watch opportunities and assist nature. He tries to restore warmth, both internally and exteriorly, bringing back the circulation of the blood, which it appears is stopped by a sudden paralysis, or want of vital air, such as choke-damp. Where will this tremendous visitation travel next? Will people learn a religious and moral lesson, to prepare by times to meet their God, who has thus evidently stretched out his hand over us? Will they learn humility from the circumstance that this disease baffles enquiry and human skill, just as the world was boasting of its enlightened superiority and the march of intellect.

"May God, in His mercy, spare the inhabitants of this place, and grant them grace to repent and amend, for Christ's sake. In this prayer I include myself and family.

"I have daily visited the sick, the cholera-hospital, and attended all the burials, as a matter of duty, not presumptuously, but to encourage others; and I trust the lesson, 'that in the midst of life we are in death,' will not be lost upon me. It was a dismal sight to see the hearses travelling all day long, from morning to evening, through the narrow streets, conveying the dead to the church-yard, and to meet everywhere cots containing the sick and groaning going off to the hospital."

"*Jan.* 10*th.*—Heartily do I thank God for the restoration of my parish to its usual state of health. We have had no more cases of cholera since the 31st of December; and, notwithstanding the

urgent call of duty carried both Sabine and myself into immediate contact with the worst cases, owing to the especial goodness of God we sustained no hurt, and carried no infection to those we most loved.

"I trust I do not presume in looking forward with hope that this visitation will leave behind it much cause for thankfulness in the midst of sorrow. The church has been fuller than I ever remember it; and on last Sunday my prayer was realized, namely, that I might live to see upwards of one hundred communicants round the table of our Lord. There were one hundred and one.

"Much good is being done in cleansing the streets and houses, and I am more persuaded than ever of the truth, 'that cleanliness is next to godliness.' Some, I know, interpret this text as concerning the mind and the heart; but I take it literally,

and every year confirms me in the supposition.

"My good friend Sabine falters a little. He has overtaxed himself, and it behoves me to urge his retirement from parochial duty. My wife, who appears intuitively to know what is best for everybody, urges their going for a year to his estate in Shropshire. Methinks it were but right that he should show his young heiress to her neighbours and tenantry. Though young, she appears to possess her father's wonderful memory and sagacious turn of thought. She is a happy child, brought up in the centre of talent, great learning, and much simplicity of manner and life, with a rectitude and high tone of mind not to be excelled in any other family. The jars and discords of life are unknown there.

"Very happy letters from my three married daughters. We had agreed, my wife and I, not to mar their felicity by

the knowledge of our visitation, but the newspapers were not so considerate. They sought to share our danger, but it was happily over ere we could answer their appeal. Nessie appears proud of giving us our first grand-child. May he prove to her the blessing she has been to us, namely, a good child!

"*Jan.* 21*st.*—To-day I have received the news that the bountiful gift presented, through my daughter Pearl, by Lord Bernard to me, in so handsome a manner, has been placed to advantage in the new works just begun at Bristol. There it shall accumulate for the benefit of my little boys, for whose sake, I thank God, my mind is at ease regarding funds for their education. As a thank-offering, my generous wife besought me to deduct one hundred pounds from it, to bestow in charities and increased church accommodations, and such like. The which I have done, taking fifty pounds from her

gift, and fifty pounds from mine. May God look down upon this offering with favour, seeing that it is given with humility and great thankfulness!

"It is now nearly twenty-two years since I came to this parish, and I have seen raised, and happily been the instrument of raising, much increased church accommodation and schools. St. Edmund's chapel and schools, built and endowed through the charitable bounty of my good mother-in-law, who yet was so just a woman she would not spend the requisite sum without leave from her daughters and their husbands.

"The Nythvar church and school—deeply indebted to the Hills and Sabines.

"A new organ in the parish church—and its enlargement and beautifying will demand our next attention; and the little chapel and school over the Dinas Hill will require painting and repairing. I trust there hath been no decay of piety, but the rather an

increase in sound Bible religion; and, without seeing much decrease of Dissent, yet the preachers are a better class of men, more enlightened and charitable, with whom I am not displeased to go hand-in-hand with any good work."

"*April 23rd.*—This day my parishioners did me the honour to present me with a very handsome piece of plate — a candelabrum, value one hundred and fifty pounds, in token of their esteem, regard, and approbation of my professional conduct for twenty-three years to the day. This is very gratifying, and most unexpected by me. God grant that I may be able to give a good account, at the final examination of the Great Bishop of Souls, of my important office, and that I have, to the best of my ability, 'spent, and been spent,' among them, according to my first public promise. Methought Lord Bernard touched upon that in his presentation speech with much kindly

effect. I had almost forgotten my precise words, but it seemed he had not, and my good-hearted parishioners cheered as he instanced our late visitation of cholera as one token of the fulfilment of my vow. I was much moved. Also the mention of my dear and excellent wife was in the highest degree delightful to me. Thus, if the Almighty continues to bless us with the desire to serve him in singleness and purity of heart, if we leave our children no great worldly wealth, they will, at least, have the inheritance of a good name, and that I am fain to consider is of more worth than riches.

"Looking back upon these twenty-three years, who among my neighbours can I point out as enjoying such peace and prosperity in the bosom of an affectionate and happy family? I have sometimes thought (God pardon me) that I should have done better as a lawyer—that is, obtained more money professionally—perhaps have been in-

dependent in point of fortune. But who can say? I might have failed altogether, for want of ability, or want of luck. With a larger income we might have acquired more luxurious habits, and my children have lost that simplicity and frankness now their great charm. They have sound and excellent constitutions; they are happy and industrious, and promise so much in their excellent dispositions, that I cry out with joy, 'The possession of good children is great riches!' 'Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them,'—viz. such as mine. I pray God the three now undergoing the ordeal of wealth, position, and unbounded luxury, may remember, with love, the simple pleasures of their first home. As yet, it appears to me that they do so.

"My daughter Nest wrote me a letter on the birth of her first-born, so full of piety, good sense, and affection for her mother and me, that it will be a comfort

to me to my death. Poor Robarts! It behoves me to pray for him and his. His wife was a kindly woman, but overladed herself with cares, as Martha did. My wife is of opinion she would have lived for many years had she not wearied herself to death with anxieties. I perceive Emily mourns after her, and feareth much for the children, of whom she can hear no tidings. But I see she intends they shall not forget her. Only yesterday, when I remarked that she was again writing a long letter to Maria Robarts, and yet had received no answer to many former ones, she replied—

"'Of course, John—a day may come when they will wish for me, and they must not have to seek for me.'

"Now, this is what I consider genuine goodness of heart. My God, I thank thee, that thou gavest this inestimable woman for my wife.

"We are fortunate in having children to replace those who marry and leave us.

"Gwladys brings sunshine wherever she goes, and there is a great mixture of good common sense, yet wit, about her, and a decision of character, that will be useful to her. She is now seventeen years old, but appears to submit to the authority of her younger sister Gwendoline as heretofore — that is, in small matters. Sabine assures me that the cost of Gwendoline's education has been well bestowed, and I think it is. Her mother, whose head appears a little running upon matrimonial schemes (though, God knows, neither she nor I used any means to further those that have already taken place) says she will make an excellent settler's wife. She is so industrious, so quick, so energetic — she would be invaluable in a colony. For my part, I see not why all these qualities should not be

quite as useful at home. Therefore I shall beguile Gwladys and Gwenny with sugared words to remain awhile with their father and mother."

CHAPTER XIV.

"'Tis not the house that honour makes—
True honour is a thing divine;
It is the mind precedence takes,
It is the spirit makes the shrine.

"So keep thou yet a generous heart,
A steadfast and contented mind;
And not till death consent to part
With that which friend to friend doth bind.

"Thus dwelling with the wise and good,
The rich in thought, the great in soul—
Man's mission may be understood,
And part prove equal to the whole."

CHARLES SWAIN.

THE Sabines had been into Shropshire to introduce their young heiress to her neighbours and tenants. It is supposed

that round the Wrekin hospitality and friendship reign with a power and absoluteness unknown in other spheres; which is to be attributed in a great measure to the fairies, that love to sport in rings round their favourite mountain.

Thus the Sabines, including Miss Hill, found it extremely difficult, not to say impossible, to tear themselves away again. Moreover, they made the discovery that of all the people situated within fifty miles of the Wrekin, Hugh John Sabine was the most respected and beloved; and they, the Hills, had hitherto regarded him as nothing more than a little meek, kindly man. Mr. John Hugh Sabine considered it necessary to swear a lasting friendship with all who loved and praised his twin brother Hugh.

Therefore it may be conjectured he spent a great part of his time shaking hands with people, and that he was faster

bound by these new ties than the rest of his family. Mr. Hugh John's affections were wholly bestowed upon Regina, and he could have parted from his dearest friend without a pang, provided Regina's hand was in his. Thus the spontaneous affection and respect showered upon him became no more than the homage due to a good man. It was his right. As a member of the great body of mankind, he had been truthful, conscientious, temperate, just—no man had a charge to lay against him before the great tribunal. He was deservedly beloved, and he took the love as his due.

The house was named "Worthies," rather appropriate. It was large, irregular, and old-fashioned. A fine old avenue of Scotch fir-trees framed it like a picture on one side. Upon the other was a sunny garden, where bloomed, earlier than anywhere else, violets, snow-drops, hepaticas.

At the bottom ran a clear brook, over which, leading to the meadows beyond, was a little white Chinese bridge; to cross it the Lady Regina bore her papa Hugh a dozen times a-day, for no other purpose it seemed than to pace it back again. Evidently she considered the bridge a toy, designed and built especially for her private delectation, together with papa Hugh. Sometimes they paused, and contemplated the ubiquitous minnows, whose habits and vivacity possessed a magic charm for the placid Regina, and called forth that sweet laughter that made such music for papa Hugh.

As for "sister Margaret," she was as loth to leave "Worthies" as the neighbours were to let her go. It is not to be told the wonderful quantity of new plants, rare ferns, and exquisite views she was collecting, pressing, and sketching.

At last it was decided that their time

should be equally divided between both homes. Mr. Sabine should relinquish the living of Nythvar, or with permission keep a curate, to whom he promised the larger share of the emolument; but he still wished to have some employment. The bishop (in those days people looked more to the man who asked the favour than the favour itself) consented at once. So Worthies was placed in the hands of painters and gilders, which, giving strong token that they would return, reinforced by guests, whom they especially delighted to honour, the Sabines were permitted to leave. And that they might have no excuse to delay their return at the end of six months, the hospitable inhabitants of the Wrekin kept zealous watch over the work-people, so that none could be idle. "Thus you see, my dear friend," remarked Mr. Sabine to Mr. Leslie on his return home, "I, who for forty-three years of my life had no home,

have now two, both of which weave bands of affection and concord so strong, that I am like to grieve over leaving Nythvar, as I now lament the quitting of Worthies. Such is man, made up of contrarieties, never satisfied; and, mark me, I am now sixty-seven years old (Hugh John, my brother, is a little the younger, say about ten minutes), and I have only just discovered that the Saxon is the most perfect language of any on record."

"No man is more capable of asserting this as fact than yourself, Sabine. You have studied the grammars of seventeen, I believe."

"Yes, seventeen, only seventeen—not half of the known languages of the world; but I repine not. I think the language of a child is the most beautiful of all, Leslie. I am content, now that I am beginning my second childhood, to learn no other."

"The impressions of an intelligent child are well worth the hearing, especially in the Saxon tongue," answered Mr. Leslie, willing

to turn his friend's thoughts from a dash of melancholy.

"Ha! that fine old tongue. Read Spencer, Shakespeare, old Isaac Walton. Examine deeds, statutes, charters, terms of science. History throws light upon the ancient times. There is a passage in Tacitus, relative to the priests mentioned in a Saxon chronicle, giving us the first authentic account of England. We have Iceland poetry too. It is a complete language. We can trace specimens of it, handed down in unmistakable regularity, from its rudest, remotest origin, to times of elegance and refinement. Of this no other language can boast."

Having thus paved the way to gayer thoughts, the two friends indulged in a literary gossip, which refreshed and revived them much; and Mr. Sabine left in full genial glow, rolling out, "Qui didicit patriæ quid debeat, et quid amicus, &c.," which was called forth by a question of Mr. Leslie's, as to

whether poets really thought their trade idle and useless. Most of them appear to agree there is something better to be done, and that the art is but an amusement.

Mr. Sabine was a practical man—he knew nothing about poets.

About this time came news of the sudden death of Mr. Robarts, from apoplexy. Very prompt was Emily to fly to Cheltenham, on a mission of charity and sympathy.

She returned within a week, and John even does not know all that occurred there.

"Poor girls!" said Emily, "poor dear girls!" and having said this five or six times, in answer to John's questions, he tacitly understood it was useless asking any more.

From other sources, especially Lady Bernard, who also fulfilled her mission of kindly feeling, it was known that Mr. Robarts had privately married some one, whom he had better have left as he found her. Also, that he had died without making a will;

but that there was a large settlement made upon his present wife and her son. Further, it was known that he had somewhat frittered away large sums of late; and though much was traced to Gustavus, some were wholly lost in obscurity.

Under the circumstances of the case, Lord Bernard came forward as adviser and trustee for the younger children; and it proved well for them; it was an ungracious office. The property was fairly divided; and, after paying the widow and her son, left in money the yearly sum of 350*l.* to each of the eight remaining children of this large family, besides a share in the mineral wealth of one of the mines in the Valley of a Hundred Fires. This being fluctuating, according to the price of iron, Lord Bernard recommended them to live within the income of which they were certain, reserving the other as it might come in the shape of a gift.

He applauded the plan of the second

and third son emigrating to Canada with their capital, to make a settlement there. He offered Maria and her younger sisters the White House at a small rent, assuring them that, with two such mothers as Lady Bernard and Mrs. Leslie at hand, they would never feel at a loss.

But at present Gustavus and Maria, the two eldest of the family, were not amenable to prudent suggestions. To talk down, look down, irritate and annoy the unexpected mother-in-law and her son, was to them not only a duty, but a delight.

Lord Bernard engaged a sensible and amiable woman as governess for his wards, and then, following the example of Mrs. Leslie, came home. No one remembered anything of Mrs. Robarts now but her gentleness, loveliness, and fondness for her children. For her sake, any sins her children might commit against old friends, through the arrogance of youth, were forgiven and forgot-

ten. In his pacings to and fro on the Cinder Tip, Mr. Leslie could see the chimneys of the White House at one point; therefore many a prayer went to heaven that some day these poor, misguided young people might find themselves safely sheltered from the perils of the world, within it.

The twin boys were now fine fellows of two years old, and able to patronize their nephew, a year younger; but that they might not think themselves great heroes for being uncles at so early an age, Emily's last child, a boy, was born this year, and was thus younger than his nephews.

When he was five or six months old, Emily and John went to Worthies, where it is not to be told the sensation they caused. Whether Mr. and Mrs Sabine had been telling any tales of them before they arrived, is not known; but Mr. Leslie's learning and goodness of heart, with Mrs. Leslie's beaming sunshine of soul, and uni-

versal philanthropy, caused them to be *fêted* and welcomed after the manner of heroes and heroines. How good it is to be praised and loved! The fear of forfeiture of such prizes in the world's lottery urges increased circumspection, tenfold watch and ward. Though, with regard to Emily and John, their characters being so natural, they only strove to give back liking for liking.

On Mr. Sabine's return home to Nythvar, he received a visit from a young gentleman who had been recommended by the Bishop as his curate.

Now, Mrs. Sabine, Mr. Hugh Sabine, Miss Hill, and the Lady Regina, all testified a liking for this young man, in their different ways; and as Mr. Sabine not only agreed with their several opinions, but had a separate one of his own equally favourable, it appeared to him he had nothing to do save sign and seal the agreement.

But he was foiled, by no less a person

than the young curate himself—by name, Martin Raymond.

"You don't like us?" remarked Mr. Sabine.

"Yes, I do—I like you all too much, I fear."

"I know many languages, but the language of ambiguity always appeared to me a worthless study."

"Then, to tell you the truth, sir, I hear that your neighbour, Mr. Leslie, has many daughters, one more charming than another."

"And why should that prevent your taking my curacy?"

"I might fall in love with one of them."

"God bless you, man, you could not do a wiser thing."

"But I am poor—my patrimony is but a hundred a-year, and they look very high for their daughters in marriage."

"Yes, indeed they do, sir—they require good principles, good temper, and good health."

"Oh, if that is all, I think I may brave the danger."

"Do so—I'll hold you Scot free; and if not, will bind myself to pay a penalty."

So Mr. Raymond was installed as curate, and took lodgings within a few minutes' walk of Nythvar.

Shortly he was introduced to the Leslies, and upon a first introduction he laughed at himself for his fears. The two Miss Leslies, now of an age to be considered in the matrimonial market, were not at all the sort of young ladies that he had expected to see. They had fine eyes, pretty figures, white teeth, but were not beauties by any means, especially near that younger sister of theirs, still in the school-room, who was loveliness itself. Moreover, they appeared wholly ignorant

of the art of flirting. They addressed him pretty much in the same style as if he was old Mr. Sabine or their father.

Now, Mr. Raymond had tasted the sweets of conventional intercourse with certain fair parishioners in a town, and was so far an adept in flirting, that he knew the precise moment when to drop the friend and assume the parochial pastor. This is a disease very common now-a-days, but was rare then.

At first, he was piqued—secondly, he was interested—thirdly, he was fascinated—fourthly, he was met by Mr. Sabine, tearing his hair—finally, by the advice of his old friend, at the end of three months, he offered his hand to Gwladys, and was accepted, with innocent delight by her, and much pleasure by her parents. To be sure, he was not at all rich—indeed very poor; but he was a very good young man, and had no expensive tastes. Mr. Sabine, to be as

good as his word, gave him 250*l.* a-year for doing his duty; and Miss Hill agreed that they should live at Nythvar, not only to air it and keep it warm, but to enjoy it during the six months of their absence. So one of the little Leslies came to live in the very house that had been considered by them as an earthly paradise—and Gwladys petted Miss Hill's favourite flowers to the utmost extent flowers could bear.

CHAPTER XV.

"To have the power to forgive
Is empire and prerogative;
And 'tis in crowns a nobler gem
To grant a pardon than condemn."

BUTLER.

IN a visit that Nessie paid this summer to the Valley of a Hundred Fires, being always of an eccentric turn, and prone to copy the ways, manners, and deeds of others, she scandalized her sisters, and amazed her mother, by assuming all the airs of a fine lady.

Gwenny, whose wisdom was acknowledged by the whole family as sufficient to cope

with any emergency, advised the treating of this fit with profound contempt—that is, by no means to notice it at all. Consequently it soon passed off; but it is necessary to mention these little traits, to show that the Leslies had their failings.

Neither was Gwenny without them, as may be seen from what follows.

Once more had the vast multitudes risen in rebellion against the iron-masters.

To quell the matter at once and for ever, Government sent down two companies of soldiers, billeted in the town, and commenced building barracks for their permanent occupation. Such a quarter, upon such duty, necessarily caused the Demon of Dulness to haunt the officers stationed there.

They were hospitably entertained at the Castle; but they could not always be there.

At Nythvar, Mr. Sabine puzzled them

with problems and learning beyond their capacities. Mr. Hugh considered it unnecessary to entertain them at all, and was in his turn regarded as rather "wanting." Mrs. Sabine was capitally kind and hospitable, Miss Hill rather too blue and matter of fact, the Lady Regina, six years old, a little too young to flirt with. Thus Nythvar had no particular attractions.

Then the doctor was a jolly old fellow, and his wife a motherly dame; but they liked cozy evenings to themselves, now they were getting old. As for Jeffreys, anything of the male kind, excepting his father, his two sons, and Nest's husband, he took no interest in whatever. Had all the officers been of the gentler sex, the most inefficient among them would have claimed attention from Jeffreys; and he would have considered it a duty to be civil to them; but at present he had

no thought for them, even of a professional kind. They had their own doctor—it was unnecessary for him to speculate even upon their looks.

In this state of profound indifference, Bessie Trumps participated. But at the parsonage there was a great deal to amuse and please these forlorn officers. Mrs. Leslie was a charm in herself; she always appeared so delighted to see them—they felt quite sorry not to have arrived sooner. (N.B. Emily felt very much for them, expatriated from their friends and native county to watch over their safety—it was only proper gratitude to be kind as a mother to them.)

Mr. Leslie also pleased them—he entered with pleasure into all kinds of descriptions of soldiers' and sailors' lives, and questioned and listened, as if lamenting he was not one of them. Whereas the secret of this interest was that little

Dickie, the eldest twin, had been heard to declare he would be a "yailor," and the youngest, Bernard, had been equally vehement in deciding that he would be a "yoldier"—which, allowing for the liberties their imperfect tongues took with the noble Saxon alphabet, will account for Mr. Leslie's interest in the two great arms of the service. As for all the young ladies, it was a thousand pities Gwladys had thrown herself away on a curate; anyone among the officers would have been delighted to beguile their time by a flirtation, and its further consequences. Gwladys and her husband lived at the parsonage when the Sabines were at home.

And it was still further a thousand pities that Lily, Winifred, Frances, Joan, and Pussie were all so young.

There was only the wise and erudite Gwenny; and she, alive to the honour of the family, which allowed no young

Leslie to arrive at the age of twenty without being engaged to be married (at all events) speedily made her selection, and was full fathom-five deep down in a flirtation, under the innocent, unsuspecting noses of her father and mother, when Adeline and her husband came on a visit to the Castle.

Adeline misliked the state of things very much, and made a faint show of tale-bearing, which was speedily routed by Gwenny.

She knew her own affairs, required no advice, and would permit of no interference. When Captain Daintree was in a position to propose, he meant to propose: there was no need to trouble her father and mother until such an event occurred.

Having great faith in Gwenny's wisdom, Adeline forbore further remonstrance; and was so far rewarded, that before she left

Captain Daintree confided to her that he meant to propose—and he did do so.

But even the unassuming Mr. Leslie and his easily pleased wife demurred.

Captain Daintree had less patrimony than Martin Raymond, owned to being a little in debt, and was under orders for India. "All three," as Mr. Leslie remarked, "very untoward things." Nevertheless, not to be remorselessly cruel, they allowed it to be an engagement; and thus, if Gwenny was not married before she was twenty, at least she was engaged to be so.

Thus was mammon and all its unrighteousness creeping into the artless bosom of the parsonage. Emily took a more pleasant view of this engagement than John.

"Gwenny is so fitted to go into distant countries, and make her own way."

"So you once said before, Emily, and I did not contradict you, as I never conceived I should have an occasion to do so.

At present, I am inclined to think I shall be glad if Captain Daintree changes his mind."

"Not at all, John; and think of poor Gwenny's feelings. Why should she not be happy, as well as her sisters, all because they have made greater marriages?"

"My dear, I go so far as to say that had he been as rich as any one of our other sons-in-law I should have held pretty much the same opinion."

"Ah, because he is in debt, and, the Colonel says, gambles; but, with a wife like Gwenny, he will be saved from all that. She is just the very girl to keep him right."

"I will not pay you so bad a compliment, my dear, as to suppose that your daughters are not capable of anything: in short, I have so high an opinion of them that I do not wish to lose them. Just as we gain some advantage from all the care

and expense we have had with our daughters, it appears to me that some one pops in and thinks he has a right to command our gratitude by carrying off what we wish to keep."

"Oh! John, but here is the post!—and oh, how very glad I am—a letter from poor Maria at last!"

"I hope it is to say that they will accept Lord Bernard's offer of the White House. There will then be some other girls than mine to amuse the poor idle young officers. The Colonel himself told me, only yesterday, he had never seen anything so pretty as my little fifteen-year old Lilly!" And Mr. Leslie walked away with his own letters, grumbling.

His wishes were realized. In a rambling, scrambling, unconnected species of letter, wherein Maria mixed up details of her own ailings, and Gus's failings, and the children's tiresomeness, Mrs. Leslie gathered that they

would all be glad to see some friends once more; and if not let, and Lord Bernard had no objection, they would take the White House for a year, to see how they should like it.

Ty-mawr had been sold at their father's death, and the money divided among them.

Highly charmed was Emily, and how busy she was gaining Lord Bernard's consent—painting and furnishing, and receiving the poor motherless misguided things with all the delight of a prodigal's mother, without considering them erring in the least.

Love for them and the memory of their mother invested them with angelic qualities in the eyes of Emily; while Lady Bernard, Miss Hill, and various others excused and forgot any little waywardness, deeming it a sacred duty to forbear to the orphans.

Thus Maria, under such kindly auspices, began to wake up into a considerate and thoughtful human being; and if, now and

then, the old frivolity showed itself, it seemed she liked it as little as any one.

But they could not grow wise all at once. The relief from a desolate, friendless condition to the society of those who had known them from childhood, and loved them for no other reason, and to whom they could turn for help against the inroads of Gustavus's evil ways, was in itself so great a boon, they rested there comforted and happy.

But their advent was a high dispensation to the *ennuied* young officers.

Three girls—Maria was now twenty-seven (and almost as pretty as ever, but for a slight lameness, left as a legacy by the scarlet fever), Elizabeth twenty-two, and Anna twenty, all remarkably pretty, and, what was more to the purpose, thoroughly initiated into the elegancies of the fashionable world (which, be it known, the Leslies were not), gave new life to the Valley of a Hundred Fires. It became now as remark-

able for gaiety, life, and liveliness, as it had been before dull and overpowering with inanition.

Moreover, these girls had money. Pretty girls, with three or four hundred a-year, were as sugar-plums to a marching regiment.

Alas, for poor Gwenny!—but, oh, triumph for her papa!—Captain Daintree succumbed at once to the charms of Elizabeth.

Now, it would take a whole volume to relate the different states of love, jealousy, and despair into which Gwenny fell, and all without outward show; and how at last they all gave way and shrunk into ghosts, shadowy and painless, before the tearful grief of Lizzy, who acknowledged that she loved this too attractive man; and how he would love her, too, and be very glad to marry her, only he was engaged to Gwenny. Would not Gwenny give him up?

It must be owned that at first Gwenny

would like to have taken hold of little fragile Lizzy, and shaken her well, to see if by any chance a grain of common sense and good feeling would appear on the surface of her character. Anon she pitied her; then she comforted her; finally she left her, bidding her hope a little; but if she breathed a word to a single soul of what had passed between them, Gwenny would hold Captain Daintree to his engagement, if they each lived to be a hundred.

"And I am younger than you," was Gwenny's significant speech.

She went straight to Lady Bernard, and told the whole tale, who was inclined to felicitate Gwenny and pity Elizabeth. But the former was not wholly a heroine. One's first love is not to be cast aside as an old and worn-out garment—to the latest days of one's life it remains fresh and fragrant, with rosy memories.

"I will give him up," murmured Gwenny,

struggling with her tears, "provided you think it will be for her happiness."

"You are a dear, good girl! Lord Bernard shall make the proper inquiries. You are like your mother, Gwenny, thinking more of others than yourself—and I can give you no higher praise."

"But, pray, do not tell them; say nothing to my father and mother. If—if—Lord Ber—Bernard says that they—they may mar—marry, it will be time enough."

"But they may think we have done ill by you, Gwenny."

"Oh, no; if I say I wish it, they will make no further remarks; and I shall certainly say that if—if——"

"Kiss me, dear; it shall be all done as you say, and no time lost. The race of young men is degenerating fast; and I must really tell Pearl to give me no more grandsons—I am quite afraid of what they may turn out."

As for Pearl's indignation when she heard (confidentially whispered to her) the tale of Captain Daintree, the sparkle of her blue eyes was most dangerous to look upon.

Lord Bernard was wicked enough to wish the culprit might encounter one ray—it would do him good, he thought.

It sufficeth to say that this flirting hero's father and mother arrived, in answer to Lord Bernard's letter. They proved rather nice people, and were very anxious their son should marry, to settle him; and promised to pay his debts, and make him a small allowance; and they took an immediate fancy to the pretty, tender Lizzy, and still more so to her three or four hundred a-year—the father investigating more narrowly than courteously the precise sum to which she was entitled, and taking good care to have the uttermost fraction settled on his son.

And Gwenny was the first to tell her

father and mother, the latter of whom sat down in a whirlwind of astonishment (it was so easy to surprise Emily), and the former kissed her tenderly, saying, "He had not heard such good news for many a day." Emily, being a woman, was about to cross-question Gwenny, but one look into her face was enough. She too kissed her, but in silence. And Elizabeth was married, and became Mrs. Daintree, and sailed to India with her husband; and Gwenny remained at home, silent and quiet, for some months. Suddenly an event occurred.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Peal out evermore,
Peal as ye pealed of yore,
Brave old bells, on each Sabbath day.
Tell us life's pleasures with death are still rife;
Tell us that death ever leadeth to life;
Life is our labour, and death is our rest—
If happy the living, the dead are the blest."

Dublin University Magazine.

Extract from Journal.

"*Oct. 5th*, 183—.—To-day I received the following letter from the Bishop of ——:—

"'My dear Sir,

"'I have much pleasure in seizing an opportunity to mark the high estimate I have formed of your private

worth and public services. The living of Llanclywd is now vacant, and I offer it to you, aware at the same time that I withdraw you from a scene of great usefulness, and that your loss to your present parishioners cannot adequately be supplied. But it has always appeared to me unjust to deny anyone an opportunity of comparative repose from laborious duties, because he has performed those duties uncommonly well. It is with this feeling that I point out to you the advantages of a change for yourself. With regard to intrinsic value, I believe the two livings are much the same; but one is in the country, and the other—I need scarcely say, few save yourself would have borne its situation so long. Again, from a teeming population, doubling itself in seven years, you will retire to a rural hamlet, in which from five to eight hundred inhabitants only will demand your care. You

will thus be spared the expense of curates. Once more, the parsonage house is large, new, beautifully situated, and surrounded with fine pleasure-grounds. Finally, you will be within easy distance of all those friends and neighbours, among whom, having borne together "the burden and heat of the day," you would fain hold these ties unbroken in the evening of life.

"'Allow me to subscribe myself, dear sir, your sincere friend in the fullest meaning of the word, "'EDWARD ——'

"*Oct.* 8*th.*—I have accepted this offer (presented to me with such kindly feeling), under, I trust, Divine guidance. I hold myself not justified in declining what my friend Sabine calls 'a quiet and honourable retirement' for my old age, if it please God to spare my life. It is not so much the labour of this parish that tells upon me, but the heavy responsibility of the charge of so many souls for

so many years. How shall I give an account of my stewardship?—especially when I recall that but twice during the period of my ministry have I been deterred by illness from doing my duty. Unimpaired in health and mind, with no remembrance of vexatious disagreements—with the honest conviction that I can leave with credit, and that my dear wife and daughters have assisted me to do so, I record, with hearty thanks to Almighty God, these numerous mercies. It is also a matter of exceeding pleasure to me that Lord Bernard has now a nephew, an excellent and zealous young clergyman, to take my place. It is, methinks, beneficial to a parish such as this is, to have some change; and though the number of curates employed has in a measure prevented me and my people from sinking together into a certain apathy not uncommon, a new head will not be altogether without benefit.

"I perceive, by the alacrity with which my dear Emily prepares to move, that this country parsonage, with its gardens, lawns, trees, and rural pleasures, has great charms for her; or, more truly perchance, this smoke-invested mansion has been a silent torment to so tidy a housewife. It is like her to have said nothing; and now I remember but yesterday she besought Lord Bernard to turn the 'White House' into the parsonage, and give this up to the clerk of the works—a good suggestion. My Emily thinks that young Mr. Bernard, the new vicar, wants a wife, and will find one at the White House. But I misdoubt me of that: he is a practical man, and must have a helpmate indeed—such as my Emily has been to me.

"Gwenny has just brought me in this paper, now printed and posted up in all parts of the town. It would be affecta-

tion in me to deny I deserve it, for I should be unworthy to bear the name of Christ my Saviour had I not striven to do my duty; but God forgive me if I arrogate more to myself, or regard this most gratifying testimonial further than the inheritance it will leave my children of their father's good name:—

"(COPY.)

"'The Rev. Mr. Leslie, who, for a period of twenty-seven years, has assiduously discharged the onerous pastoral duties of vicar of this parish, and whose numerous, but unostentatious, acts of charity, uniform urbanity, and benevolence have endeared him to all classes of his parishioners, being, by the patronage of the Lord Bishop of ——, about to remove from this incumbency to that of Llanclwyd, it is deemed no more than just that such conduct should have a permanent mark

of the esteem and love of his parishioners.

"'To this end, a meeting will be called of all the respectable inhabitants of the Valley of a Hundred Fires, to take into consideration a due and fitting method of fulfilling the same. Day of meeting, Oct. 18th—six o'clock, P.M.—Town Hall.'"

It will suffice to say that the result of this meeting was another presentation of plate, consisting of various useful articles (including a superb clock for Mrs. Leslie) the whole catalogue of which, and the manner of presentation, with the names of the subscribers, and the amount subscribed, were all duly set down in John's journal, with that precision for which he was remarkable, together with his own observations and commentations. He appears to dwell with peculiar pleasure "on the handsome clock presented to my dear wife, than whom one more deserving of it I should think never lived."

Their new residence was distant some eighteen miles from the old one, which caused the parting, cemented by the reciprocal acts of the friendship of twenty-seven years, not to be so painful as it would otherwise have been. Besides, they went laden with so many good wishes, and they were received with so many more, that it was impossible to bewail anything.

How Emily revelled over the delights of her clean, airy, countrified residence! How Gwladys (Mrs. Raymond) felicitated herself upon a green-house nearly as pretty as that under her charge for six months a-year at Nythvar, now distant from them fourteen miles by the road, six over the mountains.

And how there was an immediate determination on the part of the whole family to become country-people at once.

For this purpose they set up a dairy,

a poultry-yard, and a piggery, together with the pleasing prospect of making their own hay.

It need scarcely be said that under any circumstances they must have bought their experience at a certain value. But under Emily's superintendence the whole *ménage* was a total failure, and ruinously extravagant.

She gave away all the new milk to little children and old people, because she considered it would do them more good, warm from the cow, than skimmed. So of course there could be no butter.

She was so happy feeding all the cocks and hens that she never lost an opportunity of doing so—consequently the latter became obese, and too idle to perform the great duty of their lives, viz., laying eggs.

As for the pigs, regarded in the same benevolent manner, they were fit to become bacon in July. And when hay-making

time came, no one but Wilsy (and that forty years ago) had a notion of the delicate manipulation necessary for the "fragrant" grass of the field. Fortunately, Gwenny's good sense came to the rescue. As mamma considered it only proper that in her rural abode she should have something to pet, Gwenny obtained for her a beautiful and playful kitten, with which she was well pleased, declaring her intention never to suffer it to undergo the pain of having her children drowned, when it had any.

John looked up from his book.

"It appears to me, then, that we shall eventually have a number of cats."

"Not at all—I shall give away the ugly ones."

"I hope Pussy will be pleased with your kindness, and appreciate the difference between her children being drowned, or given away."

"Oh, I daresay she will, John!"

Fortunately, Pussy was never put to the proof. Emily was always preparing for her a nice soft basket, in which the expected kittens were to repose. Whether Gwenny was justified in leaving to her mother this fond expectation, which she knew was never to be realized, must be left to an impartial judge. Pussy's Christian name was Kitty, but it ought to have been Tom.

And now, shall we leave Emily and John in this their last earthly home, save the few feet of earth we shall all inherit, or shall we trace their career for a few more years? The change to the new abode was beneficial to all.

By-and-by, Lily was bespoken for Mr. Bernard, the vicar, and went to live at the new parsonage, the White House. For the fidgety, restless Robarts, had whisked off again, and taken a little suburban house near London.

Poor old Dr. Dawson died, aged eighty-two, and was followed in another summer by that dearest, kindest old lady, his wife. They were both ready to go, leaving many grand-children to take their place.

"The world is going too fast for us," were his last words to his friend Mr. Leslie, who had come over to pray with, and administer to him the last holy rites of the Church, at his own request.

The Sabines gave up Nythvar altogether to the Raymonds, and settled permanently at Worthies. They were becoming very old men now, those twin-brothers. But death seemed afraid to touch them, guarded by such tender hearts as Mrs. Sabine's, sister Margaret's, and the Lady Regina's.

The younger Dawsons, Jeffreys and Bessie Trumps, migrated to Cheltenham, where, having purchased a good practice, he was enabled to educate his children according to the established rules of society. Parents

were beginning to discover that education must be first-rate of its kind, if they wished their children to keep their place in the world.

As for Lady Cuthbertson, she was still that "bright, particular star" that Jeffreys continued to worship, very much to Bessie Trump's satisfaction. His peculiar temperament required an idol, and it was well he continued faithful to that one. Looking over Mr. Leslie's journal, we find various facts noted down, out of which we must pick the most important.

"*March* 17*th*.—I went to London to insure my life. My proposal was declined by two offices, and yet I am conscious of no complaint. It proves I have been negligent, and ought to have insured thirty years ago. Why did I not? It was never suggested to me by any friend, or by my own thoughts. I believe I have expected more lucrative preferment. The journey to London and back

gave me no more fatigue than thirty years ago; so I have reason to be thankful, which I trust I am. We intend, D.V., this summer to visit my dear daughter Nest, in her Scotch home; returning through Worcestershire, to see Adeline in a parsonage that, I am told, is unmatched for beauty. 'Tis an excellent living. I thank God for the great happiness of these my two daughters.

"We think, also, to stay a week with those good people, the Sabines. God preserve them! My wife grieves over those poor girls, the Robartses, whom I went to see in London. I fear their brother preys upon them. Anna is yet fretful upon the matter of my son-in-law Bernard. I believe my pretty Lily is entirely ignorant of her wishes regarding him. In short, I must conclude my dear Emily and Anna herself deceived themselves. I cannot discover that they had either of them any grounds for supposing he liked her, or meant to propose to her. To use

his own expression, he selected my daughter Lily for his wife from the first moment he ever saw her—she being eight years old, and he eighteen.

"Nevertheless, according to my Emily's desire, I urged them to come down and pay us a visit. May they derive the comfort and solace that I do from her bright spirit and happy energetic manner!

"*April 20th*, 183—.—My happy wedding-day! I return thanks to Almighty God for almost uninterrupted blessings during a happy union of forty years—particularly for the 'blessed dowry of good children.' God grant that we may all pass through things temporal, that we may all meet in Christ's fold in heaven! Amen.

"'Non ego illam mihi dotem duoc esse, quæ dos dicitur;
Sed pudicitiam, et pudorem, et sedatum cupidinem,
Deûm metum, parentum amorem, et cognatûm concordiam.'—*Plaut. Amphit.*, ii., 209.

"Quoted by Bishop Jeremy Taylor, in his 'Sermon on the Marriage Ring.'

"*Nov. 5th, same year.*—I don't have the Church service; for I really think we had better consign to oblivion the horrors of the Gunpowder Plot (A.D. 1605)—I mean so far as not to impute such principles to Roman Catholics of the present day. But both religion and policy enjoin us not to forget how religious principle, abused and corrupted, is made an engine of the greatest cruelty and injustice.

"The Roman Catholics have never abjured the Popish principles—that they are under an infallible guide, and that the end sanctifies the means. Let us practise the Christian precepts, to return good for evil. But still we must retain the wisdom of the serpent; bigots on either side are not to be trusted too far.

"*Dec. 25th.*—I rose in the night and returned thanks to Almighty God, on my knees, for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. I do not pretend to understand the mystery

of God becoming man for our sakes, but I am thoroughly convinced of the depravity of human nature, and do not see how, by natural efforts, we can obtain heaven. God has been pleased to reveal a way to us, by sending his only Son to take our nature upon him, and die for the atonement of mankind. All praise and glory to God and his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

"I thank God, also, for my dear daughter Gwendoline. I know not how her mother and I should do without her. Little Joan, too, though now a great girl, appears to anticipate my wishes.

"The past has been a happy year, in which we have much for which to be grateful — our health, welfare, the pleasant and spacious home to which we have removed, the happiness of the numerous family belonging to us.

"My pretty Dickie's name is down as a volunteer for the Navy when he is sufficiently

old, and that of his twin brother for the Military Academy at Woolwich. I have been assured that to be well-grounded in history, geography, and mathematics, in fact, a thoroughly sensible English education, will be all the preparation they need (provided they are sharp boys) to pass an examination. I make bold to think they are sharp boys. How shall I like to part with them? They early chose each their own profession, and they appear to stick to it. This augurs well for their future. They are pretty fellows, with black eyes and fair curling hair, and little roguish faces. They bear no resemblance to their brother in heaven, neither does little Henry. Time draws on, when, if I am worthy, I shall see him again."

"*Oct.* 18*th*, 183—.—My dear wife grieves over the death of poor Elizabeth Daintree, who died in childbed, at Meerut, India. She has a heart for every one. God preserve

my numerous married daughters in their hours of peril!"

"*Jan.* 16*th*, 183—.—I find my temper does not improve with age. I am hasty and out of patience with these poor girls. They have now been with us three months, since the news came of their sister's death. My Emily bears with them, she says, because they lack wisdom, and are such orphans. But 'tis irksome. They appear not so intelligent as my Pussie.

"Sabine has remarked to me, that allowing the intellectual faculties to be idle, they gradually dwindle away or become torpid. I cannot discover that Maria and Anna Robarts occupy themselves in anything useful or agreeable. They dislike reading; worsted work they do not execute in summer, because it is too hot; or other work in winter, because it is too cold, and they neglect every accomplishment. I think their little fortunes, that independence which I may, in

the weakness of my human nature, have coveted for my children, has been their bane. Let me remember they are far from robust, and never possessed energy, or were allowed to exert themselves."

"*Sept.* 1*st*, 184—.—Died on this day, at Worthies, my truly excellent and revered friends, John Hugh Sabine, and Hugh John Sabine, twin brothers, who, for forty-five years of their lives lived separated, but spent the last eighteen in great love and peace together, without an hour's parting. He had of all men that ever I knew the most discriminating critical judgment, and the most surpassing memory. Only yesterday (for he had summoned us, being taken with an inward shivering and coldness of the extremities, that could not be remedied) he argued that Homer is against the idea that Æneas took the remnant of the Trojans to Italy. He quotes what Neptune says, Iliad 20, 308.

"I seem to have pleasure in recalling his last words.

"It was not supposed that Hugh was in any manner more feeble than of late months. But seeing the natural tears falling from Mrs. Sabine's face, upon hearing the doctor's opinion that her good husband could only recover through God's mercy, he took Margaret Hill aside, and besought to have a couch made up in his brother's room. These good women live to oblige, and his wish was forthwith accomplished. I know that my tender wife was deeply affected when we first entered the room on arrival, and the tears rose also to my eyes, as we saw these worthy Christians and affectionate brothers lying within arm's reach of each other, both with death on their faces. Hugh, from the moment he was placed there, appeared to sink the most rapidly, only awakening to consciousness if he heard the child Regina or his brother. But our good friend was sen-

sible to the last, losing neither vigour or intellect. 'How art thou, brother?' said John to Hugh, at four o'clock this morning. 'I have had a heavenly night, brother, and thou?' answered Hugh. 'The same, brother—the same.'

"At five, John, who had been dosing, awoke suddenly, and called aloud in a strong voice, 'How art thou, brother?' and there was no reply. 'His day is heavenly, as he thought his night. So be it—'tis just. I preceded him into this world—he is eldest in the other. Let me tell you, friends, a good man is gone to his account.'

"He said but little more, but from time to time looked round upon us, smiling with a soft beneficent pleasure over his countenance. And thus he died, ere the clock struck seven. Even the poor child Regina seems ashamed to weep, as she looks upon their calm holy faces.

"A wise and good child, now sixteen years

old, to be one day a gracious God-fearing woman. You can see it in her womanly ways, fair wide forehead, and calm clear eyes.

"These mourners have comfort. They bless God that these pure souls were permitted to dwell with them so long on earth. And when one sees the peace and comfort of home disturbed by petty jars and foolish bickerings, leading to stronger evils, they may indeed thank God they lived with Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile."

"*Nov. 4th*, 184—.—I have been to London, to place my twin boys, Richard as a volunteer on board H. M. S. Cambridge, 80 guns, and Bernard at a preparatory school for Woolwich. The former is destined for a long voyage, and may be absent eighteen months and more. I felt a pang at leaving him, but I have great confidence in his temper and prudence, and his own behaviour cheered up my spirits. He took a hearty farewell of his brother, as he had done

before leaving home of his mother and sisters. 'I have now entered my profession,' he said, 'and must consider that before anything.' This was well said by a little fellow not twelve, leaving home for the first time, to encounter the perils of the sea with strangers.

"I own I reflect with pleasure upon having one son a sailor. It is a profession that must always be of such vast importance to England, and I pray God that my boy may become a useful member of it! Bernard, I fancy, would have been better pleased to have shared his brother's more adventurous life; but I have no interest of any kind in the Navy, and in trusting fortune to favour one, I could scarcely expect the same for two.

"I travelled home as far as Swindon, by the railroad, a new, commodious, and most rapid mode of conveyance, attended with a certain degree of danger, I presume. The novelty

was good for me, for I felt desolate, as once I did before. He who is my son in heaven would (had it pleased God to let him live on earth) have been a good friend to his little brothers. I might not have had to part with them.

"My dear wife met me at Bristol; she divines the truest comfort. We like Bristol, and are always welcomed by the landlord and his servants, who remember us when we first travelled into Wales. I was sorry to miss one face—the man's name, Emily says, was Jem. We heard he was ill, so sent him a trifle, with our remembrances.

"Emily does not like hearing the wind now. It reminds me to do what I have hitherto neglected, to pray for those at sea."

"*June* 20*th*, 184—.—This day there came to settle in my parish a blind lady, by name Upton, accompanied by her son, a partner in one of the great China tea houses at Liverpool. Also he is captain of one of their

vessels, being fond of adventure and the sea. I met them on my way home last November, and was interested in the account of his voyages. At Bristol he was joined by his mother, as I was by my wife, and though she presented no appearance of being so, we discovered she was blind. She asked her son to describe to her the young lady who possessed so sweet a voice, not understanding that we were still close by her. My Emily blushed as much as any girl, and then, in her happy manner, began to describe herself. Upon this commenced a friendship, which appears likely to last, as she has at her own request come to settle near us. Her son has been here a good deal, preparing the house. We like him much.

"Lady Bernard has brought the remaining three Robarts girls down to the country, to live for good. Anna has a confirmed spinal complaint. They wish to be settled near my Emily, at which I cannot wonder."

"*April* 20*th*, 184—.—Our happy wedding day, made still more so by a double joyful event—the birth of my dear P. P.'s fifth boy, and the settlement in marriage of my dear Winifred. I agree with Mrs. Upton, that she inherits her mother's voice. There is a method and forethought about Winny that will fit her in a peculiar manner for the care of Mrs. Upton. Young Upton, my intended son-in-law, will not take many more voyages. When he can assure himself he has seven or eight hundred a-year, he will farm.

"Their mother and I see with great pleasure that our daughters are glad to be useful and do good. They have no fine notions."

"*Nov.* 11*th*, 184—.—Copy of a letter from Lady Martin to Sir Edward Armitage:—'I can give you an excellent account of young Leslie from the Admiral. He excites universal regard, high and low, and is particularly liked by his captain for his quickness and invariable sweet temper. He pro-

mises to be very clever. I can assure you that you have gained great credit for securing the Navy such a recruit.'

"I thank God."

"*Jan.* 16*th*, 18—.—These Reformers are still unsatisfied, notwithstanding their triumph in 1831—2—3.

"1. Cut off small boroughs. 2. Extend the representation to twenty populous towns. 3. Give the elective franchise to copyholders of 20*l.* per annum, and to leaseholders and occupiers of 40*l.* per annum, and to such as serve on petty juries. 4. Take the votes of districts. No person to vote, but at the place where he has resided fourteen days.

"This appears too dull, flat, and unprofitable to the rabble, who, being excluded from all consequence, will revenge themselves on the philosophers.

"It is to be feared the better part of the aristocracy will fall or be damaged by the bad. The selfish, idle voluptuary is vain and

proud, valuing himself upon rank, birth, and connexions. He is insatiate, ignoble, and insolent. These deserve and require some chastisement or calamity. But the real English nobleman of good and long descent, of cultivated mind and manners, of unblemished honour, kind, brave, compassionate, a lover of his country, faithful to his word, and obedient to his God, will never be found among republicans. There are, no doubt, many of them actuated by principle, but their manners are sharp, their characters severe. Of necessity but little attention will be paid to elegant accomplishments, refined and tender feelings. Time and hereditary virtues alone bring families to perfection.

"*August* 20*th*.—We have passed a very happy summer. My son Bernard has brought home three prizes—the one I esteem highest is that for general good conduct. Our excellent brother and sister have been with us. To the latter I shall always consider

we owe it that our eldest daughters are so happily placed in marriage so much above their expectations, which have not spoilt them either. They adorn the stations they are in. From them can be traced also the happy condition of my three other married daughters. They set such good examples as wives, that it appears my wife and I had some difficulty in keeping two or three for ourselves."

CHAPTER XVII.

"But home, sweet home, releaseth me
From anxious joys, into the liberty
Of unsolicitous delight:
Which, howsoever plain and slight,
By being absolutely free,
Enthrones me in contentment's monarchy."

DR. BEAUMONT.

MR. LESLIE'S journal consists, for the next few years, of the history of the progress of his sons in their professions, with long extracts from their letters. He records with much thankfulness numerous testimonials in their favour, and gives his reasons for thinking they will become useful and talented men. The youngest twin passed second in a

very severe examination, which caused him to be selected for the Engineers. The youngest son was destined for the Church. There is rather an interesting account, but something prosy, of the marriage of Pussie, the youngest daughter, which gathered together the whole family. She was not only much beloved among her sisters, but petted and made much of by father and mother, spite of the attraction of her brothers. We gather that he was highly satisfied with the marriage, his new son-in-law being described as exceedingly talented, earnest, and highly principled. He regrets he can promise no money, his daughter's dower being that which she obtained from her mother—modesty, simplicity, talent, a remarkable temper, a deeply religious mind, with health, and much pretty grace. Upon pronouncing her bridal vows, it became publicly known that Pussie's real name was Emily. Shortly after this come a few words of regret, evidently expressing more than

words can do, of the grief caused by the death of his earliest most valued friend, Lord Bernard, who was found dead in his chair, as if peacefully asleep. The probable blessedness of such a death, to the duly prepared, occupies several pages, together with thankfulness that the long-burdened Anna Robarts was released at last from great suffering, and the influence this affliction had in preparing her for the great change.

Then comes a season of uninterrupted happiness, followed by a long parting from the twin brothers, extracts from whose letters fill up volumes.

Suddenly, like a prosperous ship sailing in the broad security of daylight, and grounding in irretrievable destruction upon a rock, the whole family felt a throb of bitterest agony pervade them far and near.

"On this day, Oct. 22, died my dear daughter Lily, in child-bed, and two days afterwards her infant son. We do not

sorrow as men without hope, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We know not wherefore God permits the young, the good, the tender wife and mother to be taken in the full bloom and life of married duties, leaving the aged, the worn-out pilgrim still trembling on his way. 'Tis for some wise purpose.

"It can be recorded on my child's tombstone that her father and mother loved her, and had no fault to find with her; that her sisters can recall no instance of a harsh thought even; that her husband and children had for wife and mother one of the sweetest, gentlest, most excellent creatures this earth can produce, whose whole life was beautiful, and her death divine. May my last end be like hers!"

It may be the family of the Leslies had become unfaithful to God, swimming high on the tide of prosperity, and that it was necessary sharply to rebuke them. And in taking the fairest, dearest, best, the wound hurt to

the quick. There was not one among the sisterhood who would not willingly have died to save her.

And yet she left deeper mourners. Over their sorrows cast a veil.

Let us take a peep at Emily and John, as they pass their days, now so far advanced in life that they are about to celebrate their golden wedding-day, the fiftieth anniversary of that happy event.

The parsonage is very quiet, the day mild, with a breath of the coming summer wafting about in soft gushes.

John has a walk, on which he paces to and fro. On one side of it are strawberry-beds. If Emily has a wish in the world, it is that strawberries would blossom and fruit every month in the year, because at this moment John is stooping down, half-absently, as if perchance even in this month of April, ruby ripe, this English fruit may be nestling within the fringed

leaves. He is accompanied in this walk by an old, lame, wall-eyed sheep-dog. As Emily has her cat to pet, now properly named Milly, who makes constant use of the warm basket, and supplies the neighbourhood with lazy, ill-educated kittens, so has John a pet—this dog, which he picked up no one knows how.

Emily is gardening. First she snips off the top of a dandelion plant, pleasingly happy in the idea that she has effectually routed that enemy encroaching on her lawn. Then (having read an advertisement on the wonders of guano) she sprinkles little doses of it over various plants, giving an extra pinch to her favourite ones. At this moment John calls her.

"Emily," says he, "I think Daddy" (the dog) "is not quite well."

"Dear, dear!" exclaims Emily, quite concerned; "he does look ill—poor fellow, poor fellow!"

Daddy slowly wags his tail, and tries to look intelligent with his wall eyes.

"I think it must be rheumatism," remarks John, who, having experienced no other ailment himself, knows of none other.

"Perhaps it is," answers Emily, seriously; "he must have a warm bath and a flannel jacket. But we will consult Gwenny."

Gwenny is discovered teaching "little Kitten," the motherless grand-daughter (upon whom is poured all the love of the whole family, that was her mother's) and they both ran out on the summons. Gwenny wears spectacles, and puts them on to examine Daddy's case.

"He is only very old and stiff, papa, with age."

"Not at all, Gwenny," answers Emily; "he is quite a young dog—we have only had him ten years."

John gives no answer. He suddenly ac-

quiesces in Gwenny's idea, pats Daddy on the head, and resumes his walk.

Emily is about to deluge a plant with water.

"Oh, mamma! stay, stay!" said a new voice.

"My darling Gwladys, how are you?—You are the first to arrive, and where is Martin?"

"You are killing that plant, mamma, with too much water."

"I thought it looked sickly and yellow, requiring water — come in, come in, my dear. So Martin walked; and how is the white pony?—very tired, I daresay. Anne, Anne, go immediately, and order a quantity of corn for Mrs. Raymond's pony — come in, dear, and rest."

"Why do you not prevent mamma killing all the plants, as she does, with such doses of guano and water, Gwenny," remonstrated Gwladys, while the former assisted her to remove her wraps.

"Why should she not kill them, if it amuses her?" answered Gwenny, philosophically.

"I always feel for flowers, they seem to me living things. I cannot bear to see them mismanaged and dying by inches. Nessie has arrived, and brought three of the children."

"And what is her mood this time?"

"Oh, pretty sensible!"

(It appears that Nessie still has a habit of copying other people's ways and doings, the first exhibition of which propensity was that epic poem, considered by her as a worthy imitation of one of Lord Byron's.)

"I am maist prood to see ye, Mrs. Raymond," says a voice at the door; "I hae redded up the pony, and pit her a' straight. Ould Anne's a bit froited of her."

John and Emily are still unencumbered with over-much wealth, and so don't keep a man-servant, only a gardener, who has just

gone down for the ninth time to the railway station, which is situated a quarter of a mile from the garden-gate. So Betty (Betty of former days) turns groom. "And I am much obleeged to ye for whatten ye hae brought. I wadn't let our missus get in ony great store agin the feast-day. I reckon, ses I, we'll ha'e a gran sight of presents, and Bill Gardener is doon the noo, fatching up whole hampers. My Leddy Cuthbertson hasna forgotten her share, I'll warrant. But I'm no letten missus see but the half o' what we getten, for she'd gie the mosten on it awa. So if ye dinna see the crock o' butter, and the fine store o' eggs, Mistress Raymond, ye'll ken I has 'em a' safe, and they'll do their duty, ye may mak a certainty on. But ye mun coome doon, the lairder's a foine sight."

It was a very fine sight indeed; and Emily, having accompanied her daughters, begins

at once to settle which among her neighbours and sick folks are to share in their profuseness. It appears that Gwenny and Betty are accustomed to these little scenes. They are very cordial in their assents. Gwenny's "Yes, mamma," keeping time to Betty's "Ou, ay, missus."

Nevertheless, an intelligent looker on would be inclined to bet any sum that but the half of Emily's orders are obeyed.

Shortly Frances appears; she has also been down to the station to meet Joan. Joan has been absent on a visit—a peculiar visit; it may be that this visit has introduced her to a number of new people, whom she is evermore to take into her heart as her own people.

There is about Joan a buoyancy, a womanly grace, a tenderness of heart, that have ever made her most popular among the family. She was always in constant demand at their various homes, while to

her father — well, it is almost impossible to say what Joan is to her father. She is there now, flying over the strawberry beds to greet him, and "Daddy" wags his stiff tail, and tries his utmost to gambol out his salutation of joy. There is a little shyness about Joan; and the white lids shade, they cannot conceal those beautiful eyes. "So he could not come with you," remarks that matter-of-fact Gwenny, as she kisses and welcomes her. Blushes and shyness are not seen clearly through spectacles; but Joan whispers, "He comes to-morrow."

"That's a match of which I approve," resumes Gwenny. "I admire those of my sisters who have married to a maid and a house in town."

"How do you mean?" asks Gwladys, sensitive.

Gwladys and her husband lived in wonderful happiness upon 300*l.* per annum—kept a carriage and pony, and saved money.

Recalled to the remembrance of this, Gwenny apologizes. Thus it will be seen if John and Emily retained the simplicity and moderation of their earliest days, their children went with the times. Then proceed various enquiries about Kitten. The spirit of her mother follows that child, enfolding her with celestial wings, from whose feathers evils and frailties turn away, so that they come not near the child. For though every one tries to do so, she cannot be spoiled. The four sisters busy themselves in preparations for to-morrow. About seven papa looks fidgety, and mamma is constantly regarding the clock.

"Emily, you are sure the train arrives at 7h. 15m." To be quite certain, Emily looks for the twentieth time at the railway paper.

Just at that moment the shrill whistle of the engine shrieks almost into the drawing-room. "They may have missed the train," says John, evidently hoping that some one

would contradict him at once. Emily would have done so; but she is nervous too, and does not see what John desires.

Joan runs downstairs to open the garden door—Frances pokes the fire to make a blaze, Gwenny calmly makes the tea—Gwladys knits away, with a face that says, "If they are come, they will soon appear." John goes to the head of the stairs, Emily rises and stands at the drawing-room door.

There is a shout in the distance, merry peals of laughter, the slam of the garden-gate, the rush of rapid feet. Merry, breathless, glowing, and delighted, the three sons of John and Emily race into the house.

Such fine fellows, such merry hearts, they bring such refulgence of joy, such an atmosphere of honest, good, simple happiness with them, the whole room sparkled and reverberated with it. Yet, boyish as they are in their delight, the youngest is twenty-five years old, and chaplain in Her Majesty's

Navy; and they have been out in the world, serving their Queen and country, doing their duty, gaining praise, honours, rewards, and wounds—yet, in very truth, boys this night.

Emily is satisfied to press upon them all the good things in the house, and look at them; but John rises, and walks to one of them—touches him, perhaps—sits down by him for a few moments, then returns to his own seat, only to rise and do the same again by another; and he listens and asks questions, and more often than not says, "Say that again, my dear." It seems John thinks it is music that he hears, and encores it, when his sons are exchanging the silliest family nonsense with their sisters.

By-and-bye their tremendous appetites are appeased, though Emily declares they have eaten nothing at all, and must be starving.

Then they all calm down, and settle themselves to hear and give back mutual news.

Joan is taken much to task for thinking of deserting the family-party—it is unkind to Gwenny and Frances.

Gwenny apologizes for her, remarking that she should have been very angry if at her age Joan should have refused such an excellent offer, a man rich enough to keep her a maid, and give her a house in town. Again a glimpse of leaven of the world infecting the Leslie family at last.

Joan pouts, as if these advantages were to be thought of in comparison to the goodness, worth, excellence of—of——

"Very right," said Frances, just to help Joan out of her dilemma.

Papa always plays at whist from nine until ten o'clock; but he forgets all about it, looking at, talking to, and admiring his boys; so the prayer-bell rings, and surprises them all.

After that it follows as a matter of both pleasure and necessity that everyone goes

to see Kitten safely buried in slumber, comfortable and happy. Then good-night—'tis to be a great day to-morrow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Nature content to surpass all she lent
In the breath of the rose and coo of the dove,
To crown the great hymn of the universe, sent
Human love."
ERNEST JONES.

BUT apparently sleep is not necessary for all the inhabitants of the parsonage, to prepare them for to-morrow.

For who is this bonneted and shawled, evidently bent on concealment, creeping out of the parsonage just as the church clock strikes eleven in the night? It is Gwenny, with a little basket in her hand. Swiftly, as if well accustomed to it, she threads

her way through the trees, opens the wicket gate, trusts herself into the deep shadows of the lane. At a distance, like the little twinkle of a glow-worm, a light is seen. Towards this Gwenny makes her way, arrives at a small whitewashed cottage, with casemented windows. The night air blows about a faint perfume of primroses, but the door is opened as Gwenny's step is heard on the gravel, and she is received by a sleepy-eyed maiden, who just wakes up into a gleam of satisfaction at the sight of her.

"Go to bed, now, Janet," says Gwenny, "I will call you at six."

"Thank ye, miss."

During these words Gwenny had disrobed, and discloses herself cased in a warm dark-coloured dressing-gown, with a close-fitting cap on her head.

She takes jelly, oranges, and sponge-cake from her basket, which she places daintily on little dishes, and then proceeds up-stairs

with them. She enters a low, long room, barred across the ceiling with strong beams. At the furthest end, propped up on a little couch, lay a figure. From this figure gleamed large, death-frightened, anxious eyes, brightened with fever.

"I was half afraid you could not come, dear Gwenny. Your brothers have arrived, and many more."

"Luckily they do not require my services in the night, Maria."

"You are kind—good. I have wished for you more this evening than ever. All day long thoughts have been crowding on my mind, that I must confide to you ere I go."

"I was afraid, after the fatigue of the morning, you might be worse, dear Maria."

"There is a change, a great change. I have felt lighter, more happy since that sacred rite. How pleasant it must be, Gwenny, to live without an envious thought!"

"I suppose so," answered Gwenny, who was busily employed arranging the room, putting it tidy, and placing a little table with the delicacies she had brought upon it, and last, not least, a few flowers were exhibited, and laid on the bed of the invalid. "From Gwladys," she remarks.

"You must not read to me to-night, Gwenny, you must hear my confessions."

"You are excited, dear—do not waste your strength."

"No, for I wish to live over to-morrow. There shall be no sighs to mingle with the joy, and she would weep, I know. There, take your knitting, it is to me like an old friendly sound of childhood—the clicking of your knitting-pins. So you are all to be there to-morrow?"

"Yes, all—twelve children—seven sons-in-law, one intended son-in-law, and sixteen grand-children, my Aunt and Uncle Armitage, the Dawsons, Lady Bernard, Miss

Hill and Mrs. Sabine, Regina, her husband and two children, besides all the neighbours!"

"Your dear mother, when she sat with me to-day, described to me all you were to do, and how everybody was located. Twelve children present to celebrate the golden wedding-day of their father and mother. It is an extraordinary fact, Gwenny, and it is the reward of family love and union. Look at us!"

"Dear Maria, as a family, you were not so healthy."

"We were envious—in the very nursery we imbibed the seeds of envy. I do not remember the day when any remark in favour of the little Leslies did not torment us, and yet we despised you at the same time. So they remain, honoured, beloved —and we have the fate of envy and discord."

"You have always excellent accounts of

Jane and her husband, with your two brothers."

"Yes, thank God. They early withdrew themselves from the contagion of our family sin. They have made for themselves a new home, in another country. In the rising world of Australia, the name of Robarts may flourish and continue. Here, where it first grew into notoriety, it will expire with me, the last of those born to luxury and wealth — a pensioner on those I despised."

"Not so, Maria—hardly that."

"I should have been beggared long ere this, but for your father and Lord Bernard. But, Gwenny, this is only one out of many thoughts that have been crowding one upon another, since I lay on this sick-bed. They began to make themselves felt when your brothers were in the Crimea."

"And we had five nephews there also," interrupted Gwenny, with some little pride.

"It was then, I thought," continued Maria, unheeding her, "that God would prove His justice. Our family had been taken from time to time, and nothing prospered with us. You would be overwhelmed in one blow. Without understanding the reason, I considered that one out of the lot, killed or wounded, would be felt with equal severity through the whole family; and if all should go—I had no desire to be cruel in my wishes, but curiosity as to the manner in which you would all bear it, drove remorse away. I sat hours at the window, watching your father's constant walks down to the station to obtain the latest news. From the same corner I could just see the garden-gate at which your mother watched his return. This she did, as you know, until that dreadful illness seized her. How you all thanked me, and gave me (a Robarts) credit for kind and disinterested attentions.

I was watching, waiting to see the effect of the fatal news that I knew must come."

"Hush, Maria, I must not have you excited."

"I shall suffer more if I may not 'speak out of the abundance of my heart.' You know I cannot live, Gwenny—it makes but little difference how long it may be. Now, do you remember that one day, when you all went about so hushed and sad—she, who was so beaming, so hopeful, the light, the life of you all, lay just alive, and no more. I believe, spite of the brightness of her spirit, it was her too tender heart that was killing her. Then, just at that moment came the telegram to say Sebastopol was taken, and all those you loved safe. The joy that broke out, yet so subdued, so soft, that it might not startle, even with ecstasy, that weakened frame, I shall never forget, and the consultation as to how she must be told. Do you re-

member your father, still clutching the precious paper, walking gently to her bedside?—do you see us all, standing breathless behind the great screen, and he began, 'Dear wife!'—then paused—'dear wife!'—and, suddenly gushing up from his heart, a little, gentle, joyous, irrepressible fit of laughter broke from his lips like a child's first ecstasy. There was no need to say more—your mother understood the sound, and said, 'Thank God!' And she mended from that hour. Never has the remembrance of that scene left my heart. That the grave religious scholar should bear within his breast so loving, so gentle a heart, gave me the first idea that he was 'one blessed of God.' I saw now wherefore 'he flourished as a green bay-tree,' while we perished as the stubble before the wind."

Maria paused; and Gwenny, with gentle hand, bathed her poor face, and poured out the refreshing draught.

She slept for a little, and seemed to dream—for she started and awoke.

"I thought poor Gustavus had come for me. Though I and my sisters were glad when he was safe in jail, and we were free from his tormentings, yet believe me, Gwenny, I have mourned very much since —our dear, kind mother's favourite child."

"He died peacefully at last, Maria."

"How know you that?"

"Because my father and mother went up, when they heard from the governor of his dangerous state of health. They nursed him, comforted him, and my mother closed his eyes as tenderly as if he had been her own son."

"It was like them. And now you will close mine, Gwenny—you whom poor Elizabeth and I injured so. It was envy, all envy—both in Captain Daintree's case and Mr. Bernard's: in one we succeeded. Forgive me, Gwenny, before I go."

"I not only forgive, but thank you. Dear Maria, am I not the happiest of all the sisterhood? Is not mine the privilege to be the one to attend upon and guard the dearest parents in their old age? I would not change places with one of my sisters. Let them envy me. I give them leave. Frances and I desire no better fate, hope for no greater happiness, pray for no greater good, than to live with, and devote ourselves to, our father and mother."

"I believe you. It is in this family love and union that you remain so strong, so respected. Who could love us?—each more eager than the other to point out the defects of those nearest and dearest to us; unconscious, or wilfully blind to the fact that we condemned ourselves, even as we reckoned up the family sins. But enough. If she says a word to that effect, I would wish to see Lady Armitage to-morrow. You will never know, because she will never tell, how kind

she was to us, when robbed of all money, of every jewel, by Gustavus, we were suddenly left most desolate, helpless, friendless —little Ada on her dying bed."

"Poor Maria, you have had many sorrows, and much to bear. God will remember this."

"It was curious, Gwenny, how each and all of us began to perceive that whenever we left your neighbourhood misfortunes followed us. That is the secret of our returning ever and ever, even against our secret wishes—for we did not love you. But the sight of your mother's face always awoke in us peace, hope, and comfort. Nothing went wrong when she was by. We could confide in her, and the weaker, more foolish we had been, the more sacredly did she keep our counsel, the more strenuously she laboured for us. Do you remember when she interceded with Lord Bernard about not disputing with us the royalty

of the mines, now our only source of wealth, and to which I believe we have but little right—he told her so."

"'Mrs. Leslie,' he said, 'if I concede this for the sake of the girls, that ungrateful fellow Gustavus may put in a claim as heir, and I should lose my just rights for ever.'

"'Not for ever,' she answered softly, 'you will find them in heaven.'

"'So be it,' he replied; and we have had them ever since; we four that remain out of our family of fifteen children born to our parents."

"He never repented, I know—and Frank thinks as he did."

"Now, Gwenny, much as I love to watch your active fingers, lie down for a while; remember what a day to-morrow will be. You must not fail in your usual energy, my dear, kind nurse—the more as none know of the nightly duty you have so long imposed upon yourself, soothing my restless

hours. You will soon be released; I am weary—I wish to die, ere your mother goes. It seems to me as if the world would be dreary and cold without her."

And it was a wonderful day.

It is recorded, from experience, that every one in the course of his life has a season of romance. Emily's befell her in old age. She confided to John she should like to spend the fiftieth anniversary of their wedding-day in precisely the same manner in which they had passed the first.

"In every particular?" asked John.

"Yes, to the very letter?" responded Emily, eagerly.

"Then I must buy a new ring, I conclude, as we are to go through the marriage service again."

"No, no, my dear John—of course I did not mean that," she answered, as impervious as ever to any furtive inuendo in her husband's remarks.

"If I remember right, I took you for a drive in the gig before dinner."

"So you did, John—'Roan Robin' the horse."

"But we have not a gig."

"No," slowly said Emily, as she began to foresee a difficulty arising in the perfect performance of her wish. "We have not a gig."

"And even if we had, Emily, I doubt my powers of driving one."

"Oh! I would not go with you, John, now, for the world, unless some one led the horse."

"And that would not look well, Emily—therefore we must give up the drive, as well as the ceremony."

"But we can dine at two, as we did on that day, John, and afterwards have games on the lawn. And the school-children are coming to tea, and the villagers to a feast in the hay-meadow; and after-

wards we can have country dances, as we had that day, John, when you and I led off, the head of everybody."

"It was the last time I danced, Emily," said her husband, in a remonstrative voice.

"Oh, country dances are so easy, they require no steps. Anybody can dance a country dance."

Emily's fit of romance was figuratively picturing herself and John at the head of a country dance, composed wholly of couples descended from themselves; and it being rather an uncommon thing (Emily loved little novelties) she was highly charmed with the idea.

Nevertheless, she had not lived fifty years with John without comprehending some of his ways; she felt morally certain he would get out of that dance.

The House sisters were regarded with high respect and deference by the whole family.

Gwenny would not have exchanged her honourable position for the best husband among the brothers-in-law; and, between you and me, she was in the right of it, if she wished for power. Unknown to themselves, John and Emily were as completely under her sway as if she had been her grandmother *in propria persona*. The more so because she possessed the subtle art of making them believe all the time they ruled absolutely.

As for Frances, she had early imbibed the idea no one could bear a comparison with her mother, and she continued steadfastly faithful to this first love.

John and Emily were still so essentially the same John and Emily who mounted the Bristol coach forty-eight years ago to make a settlement in Wales, that it is needless to describe them again. They had grown old in appearance, and, to keep his head warm, John wore a wig, made of snow-

white hair, which, truth to say, was not always put on straight; while Emily was the prettiest old woman ever seen: a close full cap surrounding her pretty old face, beaming yet with the spirit of as youthful a heart and buoyant a spirit as when first introduced to the reader.

The world had progressed amazingly fast, especially of late years, and their children and grandchildren were swimming with the tide, no whit behind any one. Yet when they came within the charmed circle of our hero and heroine, they left their worldlinesses, their luxuries, their daintinesses, all at the garden-gate. Lifeguardsmen, Crimean and Indian warriors, Arctic heroes, with courtly young damsels, and graceful little queens of fashion and beauty, thronged round grandpapa and grandmamma with an affection and admiration called forth by the genuine truth and beauty of their characters. Had their feelings been analyzed, it

is probable they regarded them as the *dilettante* regards antique gems. Or it might be that the boundless wealth of affection possessed by Emily had diffused itself in all its purity through her descendants; while the fine heart, true faith, and good sense possessed by John had imparted the taste to value such affections as the best gift God bestows on man.

Be that as it may, there was no cessation in the clicking of the garden-gate, as group after group flocked in with their bright faces and happy hearts. If Emily had thought more about the drive in the gig she would have seen there was no time for such a pleasure, or rather the welcoming so many dear ones was infinitely more delightful.

But had any of those wild, hilarious grandsons heard the wish, Emily and John would certainly have found themselves in a gig, drawn, not by one old horse, but

most probably by half-a-dozen of these merry youths, who, bent upon gratifying every wish expressed upon this noticeable day, would have relished the notion immensely.

Sir Edward and Lady Armitage were early arrivals. It appeared that they had no intention of growing old. She was almost as pretty as ever, without a gray hair in her head. In truth, a sunny, kind heart converts a perishable frame into an evergreen, that fulfils its allotted portion of life, blooming with buds and blossoms to the very last; and when gone, they are mourned with even more sorrow than the young and beautiful—for they are more prized, being gems of rarity.

Sir Edward and Lady Armitage were still fervently of opinion that there was no one like Adeline in the world—and there she sits, not yet arrived at episcopal honours; but so far towards it, that she rejoices in

archdeaconal ones. Though she is intent now upon nothing but the pleasure of the day.

Not far from her is Nest, still supposed to be occasionally "rumbustical," which is inconvenient, because in a whisper let it be mentioned she is of ponderous size. It has been said she weighs thirteen stone, but that must be a calumny. She requires weight and substantiality to keep a lot of wild young Scots in order.

In a corner, surrounded by a group of tall sons, who appear to have one peculiarity common to all, namely, the desire to cluster round their mother, Pearl sits enthroned. Dearer, sweeter, fairer than ever—a little queen, in her stately ways; one worshipped, idolized, for the gentlest, fondest heart, whose voice is melody, so soft are the springs from whence flow her pure thoughts, yet powerful, because of the sweet pathos with which they are uttered.

Pearl has fulfilled the promise made by her mother, when in peril of death. She is winning her way through trials and temptations to the throne of God, bearing with her many souls, allured by the magic of her gentle power.

Old Lady Bernard and Miss Hill sit side by side, whispering of her, their beloved one, to each other; both such specimens of old age that none can look at them and declare that youth alone is beautiful.

Mrs. Sabine, wholly devoted to and fussy about two little rosy grand-daughters, makes another group, the matronly handsome Regina, calmly smiling at the scene, exchanging pleased glances with her husband.

Outside the room is the perpetual bustle of preparing the feast, wherein many appear anxious to help, who have no claim for the privilege. Anne, still butler and lady's-maid

in one, expostulates with many "masters and misses," who appear desirous of waiting upon grandpapa and grandmamma on this day, but who addle her brains and confuse her faculties "past bearing." Anon, a loud voice comes to the rescue, merry and sarcastic—

"Hoot awa, lads and lasses; ye shall hae nae dinner the day if ye fash auld Anne; and, my word, whaten a foine dinner I hae gettin ready for ye."

"Well done, Betty; we will do full justice to it, and not leave a crumb."

"Ay, but ye munna do that: we hae our folk i' the kitchen, ye ken, and we joost hae what ye leave, so ye mun be circumspect, mind ye."

Then Wilsy comes forward, now—according to Betty's nomenclature, Mrs. Blake Carpenter, having long ago married an amiable member of that profession. Her Roman nose, through constant smiling, has

become more in shape like a parrot's beak. She cannot say enough about all her darlings.

"Ay, but it's looky thou hadst never bairns, Carpenter," confides Betty to Wilsy's husband; "they'd hae to pit oop wi' stepmither's usage, I'm thinking."

"Our house is not fit for childer," answers the contented Carpenter.

"Ay, I'm most thinking ye darn't show yer own nose there wi'out your Soonday claes, Carpenter; she's mad upon cleaning."

Truth to say, the love of soap-and-water scrubbing and cleaning grew upon Wilsy with her years, at least as far as was consistent with her age, which now bordered upon fourscore.

It appeared that no one that day neglected to run up the green lane and inquire personally after Maria Robarts, though few saw her.

The hour of the banquet arrived, pre-

vious to which there had been a universal presentation of gifts from all their descendants to John and Emily. It was fortunate that dinner was announced, for Emily's pleasure and amazement were becoming too much for expression by words.

It passed. Then papa rose up, and made this speech:—

"My children, friends, and neighbours, I thank you all for this kindly visit. Some of you have come from a great distance, but alike to all I am indebted for the feeling which prompted you to be with me on this day. Fifty years ago I thought it the happiest day of my life. Fifty times since then I have had to forswear that speech, but truly I think I may say so to-day. Only once before in our lives have we had all our children round the table with us. We cannot hope that this will happen again. Therefore this day must be hallowed to my wife and me. It does

not become me, my friends, to praise what is mine own. Yet would I point out to my children that, under God's blessing, I owe the happiness of fifty years to my wife. When I was low she cheered me, when I was in spirits she laughed with me, when I was morose she bore with me, when in trouble she was my best assistant. Let my married children remember this, because, should it please God to enable them to celebrate a day such as this with the partners of their lives, they will discover that there is no feeling so God-like in its purity, so heaven-born in its sublimity, as that which fills a parent's heart when he says: 'Behold your mother, my children, rise up, and call her blessed, for her price is above rubies.' With gratitude to God who directed my choice, I claim a debt from my children for giving them a mother, who stands nearer to her husband's heart, higher in his mind's esteem,

closer to his innermost spiritual life, than she did fifty years ago, when he married her. Join with me, children and friends, in drinking the health of her who always shone brightest in the darkest hour."

A murmuring hum of cordial assent and love rose quick and thrilling—eager, earnest tender faces turned towards 'the mother,' who, somewhat abashed, and wholly overcome, could only say, "Oh, John!" And then came tears.

Emily had discovered that old age softens rather than hardens the heart. But tears were not allowed even of joy. Those twin boys rise up and demand their mother's health to be drunk standing—they interchange a fusillade of jokes—they throw a sprinkling of their own joyous natures over the very act. Emily's health is drunk with hearty mirth—she wipes away her tears of sensibility, and is ready to smile with every one—"Only John had said too much, far

too much: it was what she ought to have said of him." But in the very midst of saying, "Thank you, thank you!" to the numerous cries of "Mother, your health—mamma, I am looking at you!" Emily contrives to whisper to Anne—

"Take away those grapes, Anne, and send them up to Miss Robarts."

"Bless you, 'm," was Anne's hurried response, "Miss Gwenny sent her the half as soon as my lady brought them."

Then the twin sons rise up together, and, in manly, tender words, return thanks to their father for having given them such a mother. One begins a sentence, the other goes on; there is not the trace of discordance in their words; each sentence flows smoothly into the other, as if spoken by one mouth, emanating from one brain.

John listens delighted; he removes his spectacles, a sure sign of interest; he raises himself, a beautiful smile of inward joy breaks over his face.

"We are only more grateful to one other person," says the eldest.

"And that is our mother, for giving us such a father," continues the younger.

"Who, wise, excellent, learned, would become a boy, to please us boys—"

"And never permitted us to feel that any other friend could be such a friend—"

"Our counsellor, guide, consoler—"

"Our playfellow, confidant, brother—"

"The sharer of all our joys—"

"The comforter in all our griefs—"

"The gentle adviser—"

"The loving corrector—"

"Our father—"

"Beloved and honoured—"

"Your health."

A chorus of spontaneous affection greeted these words, and the excitement filled the room with a music that touched every heart.

Again feeling was about to overmaster

happiness, with its throbs so acute, either in joy or sorrow. So Sir Edward arose, and in his usual, simple, happy manner, proposed the healths of his twelve nephews and nieces, "who had been to him and his wife as twelve children of their own. He looked with pride on the medals that adorned the breasts of his nephews and grand-nephews, showing that though brought up in a family circle unequalled for love and unanimity, they were ready to leave all for their country's welfare; and none of the delights of home made them swerve from their duty. He looked with happiness upon his nieces, so many now the centre of a loving circle of their own, from whence they could disseminate the lessons of virtue and forbearance inculcated from the parent home."

At this point Lady Armitage twitched him by the sleeve.

"I cannot bear speeches, Edward—they

affect me too much; say no more — and, sister, I am ready to move to the drawing-room."

As usual, the nod of Lady Armitage was law, and in this instance never was "nod" more opportune.

They adjourned to various other scenes. Some into the garden, where the school-children were to be regaled with tea— some into the hay-meadow, where all kinds of merriment was taking place among the villagers — others broke up into parties of twos and threes, to converse happily together.

As it drew on to dusk, preparations were made for dancing, and Emily opened the ball with her son-in-law, Lord Bernard: the arch-deacon did not dance.

John looked on delighted. Kitten had made an attempt to coax grand-papa to dance with her. Loth to refuse her, he gave so many extraordinary and funny rea-

sons why it was much better that they should sit down and look on, that Kitten was highly charmed to acquiesce, more especially as her own dear papa sat on the other side of her.

John had not seen Emily dance for a vast number of years. Though conscious her style of dancing was different from that of her daughters and grand-daughters, her manner of doing it excited his warmest admiration. And with the air of a courtier and the devotion of a lover, he was ready when she reached the bottom of the country dance to take her from her partner and lead her to a seat.

It is supposed that he told her of his admiration, for she is heard saying—

"Not at all, John—very old-fashioned and wrong."

But it is Emily's last dance—it was only fitting some one should admire it.

Their family circle had been joined ere

this by all their neighbours and friends—those who had known them all their lives, drawing comparisons between those who had been young with them, and the rising generation.

"Is it not pretty," whispered Bessie Trumps to her husband, "to see those lovely, fashionable girls so attentive and kind to every one.".

"There is not one so handsome as Nest," breaks in Mr. Jeffreys, with a sort of jealousy.

"True," answers Mrs. Bessie; but adding with decision, "as she was, you mean. And they have what is much better, that beaming smile and kindly manner of their grandmother. It is a wonderful sight, Jeffreys—I can trace in almost all the grandchildren something of both grandfather and mother; and to think some are such heroes!"

"I wonder if Nest will dance," answers

Mr. Dawson. Fortunately for the rest of the company, "my lady" declines.

"I have danced once in honour of the day, and that must suffice, Jeffreys. We are rather too old and too stout to take up the room that would be better filled by younger couples."

"Bessie and I have just been agreeing none of the grand-daughters are as handsome as you."

"I daresay you think so, but I feel certain Bessie is not such a goose."

"Mother, come," interrupts a blooming maiden, "my uncles are about to give their private entertainment. One of the twins enacted the part of a conjuror. Amongst other wonderful things, taking John's cherished spectacles, a little to his dismay, and wholly to Kitten's horror, they were apparently broken into a thousand pieces, yet, after all, were discovered safe in Kitten's pocket.

After the conjuring came a lecture upon

China from the other brother, during the delivery of which many curiosities and beautiful things were shewn that he had collected.

Then dancing began again; and apparently so untired and hilarious were the young ones, Lady Armitage was quite dismayed.

"I fear they never will tire," whispered she to her husband,—"so I shall dismiss them, I think."

No such easy task; but at length they become reasonable. This day is over, so long anticipated—so much enjoyed—for the very simplicity of its pleasures formed the chief attraction to the young ones. They considered that they had spent a day such as was the fashion in olden times—a day never again to recur—a day from which to date many things, that brightened and strengthened them through the rubs and discomfitures of life, as they recalled it.

But Emily and John are saying "good night" to their children and guests.

"Good night, good night, my loves, my darlings—but where is my dear Gwenny?"

"Give me her kiss, mother," answers Frances, "I will take it to her."

"Do, my dear, take this and this; I am glad she is in bed, she has exerted herself so much to-day."

Unsuspicious Emily!

"Dear wife," said John, when they were alone, "I am at a loss how to thank the Giver of all Good for the blessings he has showered upon me—so unworthy—"

"Oh, not at all, John—you unworthy! But, remember we have one greater boon still—we have eternity before us—we shall have time, John, to sing our praises, to utter grateful prayers. Eternity alone can measure the sum of the debt we owe. And, John, am I wrong in thinking that we may minister even in heaven to those who dwell with us there? I feel I have done so little in my long blest life, and that eternity alone can suffice

for all I would do, and have left undone, towards those with whom I lived on earth."

"We know not, Emily, what work is in store for us, but you can have little wherewith to reproach yourself regarding your neighbours."

"Ah! yes, John, I never fulfilled half what I might have done."

"So must we all say, I fear."

At the moment that these words were uttered, their daughter Gwenny was closing, with gentle hand and pitying tears, the dead eyes of poor, pretty, long-suffering Maria Robarts.

THE END.

R. BORN, PRINTER, GLOUCESTER STREET, REGENT'S PARK.